



THE INDEPENDENT

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The ultimate betrayal? Tories took money from a heroin baron

The Conservative Party received a £1m donation from one of south-east Asia's most notorious drug smugglers, his family alleged yesterday. Steve Beggan and Anthony Bevis report the latest, and probably most damaging, instalment in the Tory funding controversy

Ma Sik-chun, 59, channelled the money to the party in June 1994, according to a series of front-page articles yesterday in the Hong Kong-based *Oriental Daily News*, which the Ma family owns.

According to the reports, which were accompanied by a picture of Mr Ma's son with John Major, the payment was made in an effort to smooth Ma senior's return to Hong Kong from Taiwan, where he has lived as a fugitive since 1978.

Three months after the donation was made, Ma Ching-kwan, Mr Ma's son, was invited to dine with Mr Major at Downing Street. The *Oriental Daily News* published a copy of the invitation and the menu - cucumber and taragon soup, roast lamb with rosemary and orange and caramelised lemon tart.

Conservative Central Office last night strongly denied that the party would accept donations with any strings attached.

Ma senior fled to Taiwan after being charged in connection with one of Asia's largest drug-trafficking operations. A year earlier, in 1977, his brother, Ma Sik-yu, known in Hong Kong as "White Powder Ma", had taken the same route after being tipped off that the police were about to arrest him on similar charges.

In yesterday's *Oriental Daily News*, the family said they had asked for the return of the £1m donation last April and they reproduced a receipt, numbered A10885, from Tory headquarters in Smith Square, Westminster, acknowledging the £1m gift.

According to the newspaper, the Conservatives were fully aware of the source of the funds and originally made out the receipt to an "anonymous

donor". It is understood the family hoped it would smooth the return of Ma senior to Hong Kong.

However, the reports say, the Conservatives decided that £1m was too large an amount to be credited to an anonymous benefactor so "they realised they needed a real name but ... that it was not convenient to put Ma Sik-chun". The newspaper claimed that the receipt was subsequently altered and made out to his son "CK Ma", Ma Ching-kwan, who was then the chairman of the Oriental Press Group, which publishes the newspaper.

The paper said the true source of the donation was the fugitive Ma, although a separate donation of £548,000, was donated by the "Ma family" in 1994. It is understood the bulk of this money was given to the Tories to fund a party printing press in Reading.

Last night the Conservative Party refused to discuss individual donors but a spokesman said donations were never accepted with conditions attached. "We will categorically say that the Conservative Party did not or would not accept donations conditional on favours," the spokesman said.

Asked by *The Independent* whether the numbered receipt as amended was authentic, the party refused to comment. It also failed to confirm or deny it had received a request for the return of the £1m donation. However, the spokesman said the party would return any money if it was proven to come from illegal sources.

Mr Major's office said he was in the United States yesterday and, therefore, not available to explain why CK Ma's presence at Downing Street on 27 September 1994 was not listed at the time as one of the former Prime Minister's official engagements.

According to the *Oriental Daily News*, Chris Patten, the former Governor of Hong Kong and former Conservative Party chairman, acted as a "go between" for the donation from Ma Sik-chun.

Mr Patten firmly denied the allegation yesterday, describing it as a "complete and utter fabrication".

"I know nothing about any donations Mr Ma may have



Deadly link: The family of a South-East Asian drug smuggler claimed that he gave the Tories £1m to smooth his return to Hong Kong from Taiwan, where he had lived as a fugitive. Photograph: Conor Caffrey/Science Photo Library

made to Central Office," he said. "It would have been wholly improper for me to be involved [in fund-raising] once I left the chairmanship of the party."

"Mr Ma's [junior's] father was treated in accordance with all the usual rule of law considerations. The truth of that is what has happened. Where is he now?"

In the year the donation was made, former Cabinet minister David Mellor was hired as a consultant by the Oriental Press Group in his capacity as a lawyer. It is understood that part of his role was to advise the family on whether Mr Ma senior could return to Hong Kong. Mr Mellor listed the consultancy in the Members' Register of Interests. He declined to comment yesterday.

Commenting on the donation a Labour Party spokesman said last night: "If this is true, then it is both a disgrace and a disaster for the Tory party."

"We have always said that once the source of their foreign funding became known, it would be an enormous embarrassment from which it would be difficult for them to

recover. William Hague and his predecessors have got some very serious questions to answer and we will keep pressing them very persistently."

With Lord Neill's official inquiry into party funding already taking written evidence, the bombshell charge could not have dropped at a worse moment for Mr Hague.

Tory scandal, page 7

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TODAY'S NEWS

Dobson prompts abortion row

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, prompted a political row yesterday by saying he would like to see abortion laws relaxed for early terminations. He insisted he was putting forward a personal view and that it was not a matter of government policy, but he would support such a move if it was put forward by a backbencher. Downing Street distanced itself from his suggestions, which included removing the requirement for two doctors to agree to an early termination. Page 3

Carl Perkins dies

Carl Perkins, who wrote the hit song "Blue Suede Shoes" that helped lift Elvis Presley to stardom, and who became a legend himself as one of the founders of rock 'n' roll, died yesterday, aged 65. The son of a tenant farmer in Tennessee, the singer-guitarist produced fast-paced tunes and twangy lyrics which influenced dozens of rockers to come, including the Beatles, Bob Dylan and Eric Clapton. Obituary, page 18

Ulster's wild men try to gun down peace process

Northern Ireland was braced for further killings after republicans shot dead a leading loyalist in Belfast and a second man was shot in the city. Our Ireland Correspondent charts the latest turns in the cycle of violence.

Many Catholic bars in south Belfast were almost deserted last night after the Irish National Liberation Army killing of a shopkeeper with links to the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association.

In what appeared to be a reprisal, a Catholic man was taken to hospital with serious injuries last night after he was shot several times in a taxi office in Ormeau Road, south Belfast.

The shootings took place as the Government was seeking to calm and steady the peace process after recent turmoil, with Tony Blair meeting Sinn Féin leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness in Downing Street to hear their criticisms of the direction of political talks.

Mr Blair was told by the delegation that the situation in Ulster was "grave", while the Prime Minister insisted that the peace process would not be derailed by

the latest in a series of sectarian murders. Back in Northern Ireland, the Stormont multi-party talks, which were supposed to get down to business on a detailed agenda, were adjourned for a time when news of the shooting came through. The man killed, Jim Guiney, was a family friend of Gary McMichael, leader of the Ulster Democratic party, which is the political wing of the UDA. He was married with four children.

BY DAVID MCKITTRICK

Those involved in the talks now face the task of carrying on vital negotiations at a time when the din of war is all too audible from the streets outside. There is also a high possibility of violent UDA retaliation for the killing, which would then be followed by calls for the expulsion of the UDP from the talks.

Mr Guiney was at work in his small carpet shop at Dunmurry in south Belfast when a number of INLA gunmen entered and shot him several times. They ran off

to make their getaway in a car later found burning in a republican area of west Belfast.

The INLA was responsible for last month's killing of leading loyalist Billy Wright inside the Maze prison. Four Catholics have been killed in retaliation since then. Security had already been stepped up as the cycle of killings continued, and will now be reviewed again.

The INLA does not regard itself as being on ceasefire and is against the present peace process. It would regard the collapse of the talks as a victory.

Mr McMichael said last night: "What we have here is a bunch of lunatics in the INLA who are trying to bring our entire society back into war again. I don't think that any of us are safe. There are people out there who are hell-bent on bringing further violence. Except for keeping our wits about us there is very little we can actually do."

In the early hours of Sunday morning the Loyalist Volunteer Force shot dead Fergal McCusker, a Catholic man on his way home from a night out. The killings have created an atmosphere of tension at a time when from a republican point of view the talks have not been going well.

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THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY 20 JANUARY 1998
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Abortion remark sparks debate over teenage mothers

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, yesterday ignited a savage political row by calling for an easing of the abortion laws. Among those looking on aghast will be the Prime Minister, a staunch conservative on the issue. So why has Dobson acted? Because, say Jeremy Laurance and Colin Brown, Britain has a real problem with teenage pregnancy.

Cutting schoolgirl pregnancies is to be a key element of the Government's public health strategy, to be launched next week. But the national target set by the Tories is unworkable, Labour believes.

Britain has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Europe but ministers say the target of halving it in girls under 16 by 2000, set by the last government, ignores the huge variations in different parts of the country. Four times as many schoolgirls get pregnant in parts of the North and Midlands than in the better off South.

Downing Street moved swiftly yesterday to distance Tony Blair from remarks

by Mr Dobson after he had supported changing the law to make early abortion easier to obtain and said there should be more contraceptives available to young women. Mr Dobson had suggested that requiring one rather than two doctors to authorise an abortion could make it easier for teenagers to obtain one.

"The position on abortion has not changed," said a Downing Street source. That was seen as a clear signal that there are no plans by the Government to change the law, in spite of the personal opinions of the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr Dobson made it clear he would sup-

port a backbench bill to reform abortion legislation, but without government support, that has little chance of becoming law. Anti-abortion campaigners, led by Ann Widdecombe, the former Home Office minister, insisted that the fact that Mr Dobson's position made it difficult for the Government to duck the issue by saying it was his own personal view. "It is like the Home Secretary saying he supports hanging," she said.

Attempting to douse the fire, Tessa Jowell, minister of health, said yesterday that the priority was to prevent pregnancies. Figures showed the under-16s pregnancy rate

ranged from more than 15 girls in every thousand in Barnsley to less than four in west Surrey. "The scale of the regional inequalities makes a compelling case for local action. To take the national average doesn't mean anything. We believe the way to tackle teenage pregnancy is through a combination of national and local action."

Bringing down teenage pregnancies, which are highest in deprived urban areas, is a key element in the Government's drive to tackle poverty. Four task groups have been studying the problem. Mrs Jowell said she planned further meetings with teenagers, teenage mothers – and their par-

ents. Editors of teenage magazines are also to be consulted.

Progress in cutting teenage pregnancies has been very slow in Britain, which has a high rate compared with others, despite Government targets and propaganda. Mrs Jowell said yesterday: "You can set all the targets in the world but they are useless unless they achieve something. The important thing is not just to stop these girls becoming pregnant but to build optimism and excitement about the future so that they don't feel impelled to see having a baby as the only way they can give their lives a purpose."

Leading article, page 16

Could sex education have prevented her from pregnancy at 15?

Britain's record on teenage pregnancy is worse than in any other country in Europe. Jeremy Laurance asks where we went wrong.

The Eighties was an unhappy decade for teenage sex in the UK.

Until the start of the decade, teenage pregnancy rates had been dropping. The wider availability of the contraceptive pill and of abortion during the Seventies had altered the outcome for thousands of teenagers of the sexual experimentation that is a feature of adolescence across the developed world.

By the start of the Eighties conception rates of 15- to 19-year-olds were a quarter lower than a decade earlier and teenage births were more than a third lower. Births to under-16-year-olds were also a third lower. Then the improving trend stopped and went into reverse.

Explaining that reversal is key to understanding the factors that underlie teenage sex. For it was at that point, in the early Eighties, that Britain's experience started to diverge from that of the rest of Europe. While in almost all European countries the teenage birth rate fell sharply, in Britain it rose.

In 1980, 40 in every 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19 had babies. By 1990 the figure had risen to 44. Among under-16-year-olds, 3.3 per thousand had babies in 1980, rising to 5 in 1990.

Since 1990, the picture has improved but in 1993, the rates turned up again.

Experts say the disaster of the Eighties can be blamed on the doubts about young people's rights to confidential advice raised by the Victoria Gillick case and cuts to family planning clinics. But a deeper reason driving young girls into motherhood – in the Eighties and now – is the lack of other options in their lives. Increasingly, teenage pregnancies are

wanted pregnancies – and that makes it a much harder problem for policy makers to crack.

Ann Furedi, director of the Birth Control Trust, said: "Having a child can be a rite of passage into adulthood just as getting a first job used to be."

"It can be a way for a young woman to get away from her own family, by creating a new one, and it can be a way of attracting attention."

A pregnancy to a middle-class teenager who is expected to go on to higher education is far more likely to end in abortion than one to a teenager from a deprived background. Motherhood provides them with a role they would otherwise lack.

Alison Hadley, of Brook Advisory Centres, the family planning organisation, said: "We need a big change in youth perspective but there is still a lot we could do by improving sex education and availability of contraception. Many pregnancies just happen and we could reduce those that are unintended."

The Netherlands has one of the lowest rates of teenage pregnancy in Europe, despite its liberal reputation. Greater knowledge has not made Dutch children dangerously wise beyond their years. Surveys show they start having sex six months later on average than British children.

However, reasons for the Dutch success are less obvious than is sometimes suggested. Sex education was only made compulsory in schools in 1993, family planning services for young people are sporadic and training in contraception for GPs is limited. The key lies in cultural attitudes which encourage open discussion of sex in a non-sensationalist way.

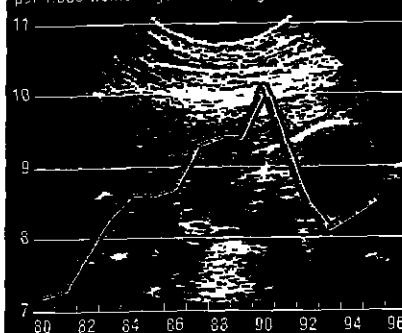
Ms Hadley said: "Sex is not regarded as naughty in the Netherlands. People are much more open about it and about allowing teenagers to make up their own minds which encourages a responsible and sensible attitude. Sex is not seen as a tool of rebellion."



Young mother: Rhonda, 15, features in the BBC's Inside Story tonight with two other women who conceived before they were 16, reflecting a trend which gives Britain the highest number of underage mothers in Europe. Photograph: BBC

Teenage conceptions

per 1,000 women aged 13-19, England and Wales



Blair treads sensitive line

Tony Blair last night was facing renewed pressure over his views on the family in the row over teenage pregnancies.

Mr Blair may feel uncomfortable with suggestions from ministers that abortion should be made easier and that contraception should be more readily available to young girls. A committed Christian whose wife, Cherie, is a Roman Catholic, Mr Blair has admitted he finds the issue difficult, although he has supported abortion law reform in the past.

The Prime Minister came under fire last October from the head of the Catholic church in England and Wales, Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster, for failing to condemn "the evil" of abortion.

His position was explained by a party spokesman in 1996: "Tony Blair is not hypocritical at all. He has a perfectly clear position. He thinks no one is in favour of abortion, nor thinks it is a good thing."

"The issue is whether we should use the criminal law to take choice away from people who have been placed in agonisingly difficult circumstances. He does not think as a legislator that the criminal law should prevent women from making that choice."

A Downing Street spokesman yesterday distanced Mr Blair from Mr Dobson. "The position on abortion has not changed," he said. That was seen as a clear signal that there are no plans to change the law, in spite of the opinions of the Health Secretary.

The Labour landslide has reinforced the majority in the Commons heavily in favour of abortion law reform.

Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent

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Child abuse inquiry goes back 40 years

A major inquiry into child abuse stretching back 40 years has been launched in Greater Manchester. Nearly 50 complaints about life in children's homes have been made and police are appealing for people to come forward.

Glenda Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent, investigates.

Greater Manchester police yesterday appealed for people who had been abused in children's homes in the area to come forward and help them with their investigation.

A major inquiry named, Operation Cleopatra, was launched yesterday in conjunction with social services and the force's family support unit after 40 people, mainly men, are believed to have made allegations of abuse about the time they spent

in children's homes. The majority of the complaints, which date as far back as 1958, are allegations of sexual abuse.

Detective Superintendent Peter Stelfox said officers were investigating 48 complaints involving children aged between 11 and 18.

Such is the sheer volume of complaints that the investigation is likely to take at least a year. But there are fears that the inquiry may be hampered by the length of time which has elapsed, and the difficulty in locating witness evidence and medical records.

"The volume of allegations is such that we are bringing them under one operation. Over the last 18 months... 58 allegations have been made," said Det Supt Stelfox. "At the moment we are sifting through and trying to gather supporting evidence which means we can go out and interview offenders. Seven local authorities have been named so far within the area. A number of complaints are about the same abuser."

He confirmed a number of the allegations were about systematic abuse and said he was expecting today's appeal to lead to further alleged victims coming forward.

"We are in the early stages of this inquiry and are beginning the painstaking process of taking detailed statements from complainants," he said. "If there are other people who have been abused in children's homes in Greater Manchester, we would like to hear from them."

The allegations arise from other inquiries conducted in Cheshire, North Wales, and Merseyside, and from the Greater Manchester area itself.

Bob Lewis, director of social services in Stockport, one of the seven authorities, said yesterday: "I hope that the culture of children's homes will have changed. We now have a series of guidelines and reports which give clear guidance on recruitment and monitoring at children's homes. The ways in which children are looked after have changed significantly in recent years."

Claims that trainers protect feet under investigation

Trading standards officers are investigating claims by the makers of expensive trainers for how well their shoes protect the wearer's feet.

Shropshire Trading Standards has acted after a complaint from a member of the public about trainers. The investigation is focusing on the advertising and marketing of the shoes' supposed special features for protecting the feet from impact. Many brand-name shoes, which cost as much as £90 to £100 a pair, claim all manner of advanced technology. If officers find that the shoes do not provide special protection the makers could be in contraven-

tion of the Trades Description Act and would face court action.

"We are interested in looking at certain brands of footwear after a member of the public said that his trainers were not doing what they're supposed to do," said Stephen Addinell of Shropshire Trading Standards.

As part of the investigation, officers are studying research published last month by scientists from McGill University in Montreal, Canada. The report, in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, said athletes who believed the claims of manufacturers were in more danger of injury because of raised expectations of their shoes' performance.

The scientists looked into the injuries among 5,000 people taking part in a 16km race in Berne, Switzerland. Those wearing expensive trainers were more than twice as likely to injure their feet as runners wearing less expensive makes.

The report found: "Expensive shoes account for 123 per cent greater frequency of injury than the lowest-cost models, regardless of manufacturer."

The report said that no athletic footwear had ever been shown to protect well against injuries and it was therefore deceptive for advertisements to say they afforded good protection.

— Paul McCann



Cool outlook: A model presenting a light bustier dress with a lotus jacket as part of the British designer John Galiano's spring/summer collection. Photograph: Reuters

Scotland Yard team set to tackle police corruption

A team of detectives has been set up to tackle corruption within Scotland Yard, it emerged yesterday. The new unit of the Metropolitan Police's Complaints Investigation Bureau, CIB3, will take a pro-active role in identifying and investigating corrupt officers, rather than waiting for complaints. It is headed by Detective Superintendent Dave Woods and has a staff of about 50 hand-picked detectives.

Meanwhile, in the courts, the police yesterday faced three cases of alleged wrong-doing: a man who spent more than five years in jail after police officers from a West Midlands squad made up his "confession" was awarded £200,000 compensation; a black couple won more than £60,000 after they were allegedly beaten by police when they complained about a "violent" arrest; and police officers traded heroin for information on crimes, an inquest heard, although police denied any drugs had been bought by officers.

— Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent

Teachers' paperwork warning

Teachers warned yesterday that they may take industrial action if the Government and head teachers refuse to cut school bureaucracy.

The National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers began a campaign to rescue teachers from mountains of paperwork and let them teach. Heads, say the union, must stop making work for teachers by over-reacting to government initiatives.

Some schools are testing five-year-olds twice, once using their own test and again using one approved by the Government. Some are reviewing targets every fortnight instead of once or twice a year. One primary teacher wrote 15,000 words by hand in a monthly report for pupils. Lesson plans and school development plans are often far too elaborate because that is what teachers think inspectors want, Nigel de Gruchy, the union's general secretary said.

Any action, he insisted, would be "teacher liberating, pupil friendly and standards enhancing".

Snow chaos in Scotland

Around 4,500 homes were still without power yesterday after snow and strong winds brought down power cables in Orkney, the Western Isles, Caithness and the Black Isle.

Staff from Hydro-Electric were working to restore electricity and additional engineers were being flown to the Western Isles and Orkney where helicopters will be used to help workmen reach faults. The gales and blizzards battered the east coast of Scotland with many roads closed in the Grampian region because of snow. Motoring organisations were urging drivers only to make journeys if necessary and a spokeswoman for Roadwatch Scotland said: "Drivers should ensure they have a shovel in their car, warm clothing and emergency provisions in case they get stuck in the snow drifts."

Surgeon suspended

A surgeon was suspended from duty yesterday after concerns about his work were highlighted in an internal hospital review.

Consultant general surgeon Christopher Ingoldby faces legal action by the families of two patients who died after operations he did. In October a six-figure sum was awarded by the High Court against Wakefield Health Authority to a patient who suffered liver damage after an operation by the surgeon. Mr Ingoldby is employed at Pinderfields Hospital, in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, which is run by the Pinderfields and Pontefract Hospitals NHS Trust. A trust spokeswoman said a decision to suspend the surgeon was made at a meeting yesterday.

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'More revenge attacks are now imminent in the deadly cycle of tit-for-tat'

The shooting in Belfast yesterday of a leading loyalist raised fears of a tit-for-tat war on the streets of Northern Ireland. Our Ireland Correspondent explains how the paramilitary organisations operate.

At the weekend, a senior security source spoke of the state of play within the Ulster Defence Association, one of Northern Ireland's two largest Protestant paramilitary groups. UDA gunmen from west Belfast had killed Eddie Treanor, the Catholic man killed in a shooting attack in north Belfast on New Year's Eve, he said. The attack was claimed by the smaller Loyalist Volunteer Force but, he added, "really, the only thing the LVF supplied was the codeword for the claim". Since then the UDA leadership had met and decided to hold itself in readiness. If Protestants were killed by republicans the UDA leaders would meet again to decide

apologetic and disorganised. It also has an extraordinary tendency to turn in on itself in periodic outbreaks of feuding. During 1996, for example, the six people it killed were made up of five men associated with it together with a nine-year-old girl killed during a feud attack. In 1997 it had only two victims, the first of whom was an off-duty RUC officer killed in a Belfast gay bar. But the second victim, was Billy Wright, the LVF figure killed in the Maze prison last month.

His death sparked off the present cycle of political tension and violence, with three Catholics killed in retaliation by the LVF and one by the UDA. Although the fact that Eddie Treanor was a victim of the UDA is common knowledge, most in the political world have turned a Nelsonian blind eye. This is because the UDR, the UDA's political wing, is one of the eight parties in the Stormont multi-party talks. Although it is one of the smaller parties there, it has added significance in that its moderate political approach is very much to the liking of both London and Dublin.

Similarly, security sources are convinced that the recent attempted murder of a man in a bar in south Belfast was the work of the IRA, acting under the fig-leaf of yet another acronym, DAAD (Direct Action Against Drugs.)

Strictly speaking, anyone at the Stormont talks table connected to organisations still active in violence is supposed to face expulsion. But everyone knows that ejecting the UDP would seriously damage the talks process, as well as probably sending the UDA back into all-out violence.

This helps explain why few inquired too deeply when the UDA was last year seen to be responsible for two deaths - that of a Catholic civilian and one of its own members killed in a mysterious "own goal" explosion. This became known as the "no claim, no blame" syndrome: the UDA did not admit involvement, and most politicians glossed over the question.

The prospect is, however, that the UDA might now attempt to take its revenge on a scale which simply could not be ignored. A number of shots were fired in the attack which killed Eddie Treanor, but only one of them came from a machine-gun. The fact that the weapon apparently jammed may have saved many lives.

If the UDA succeeds in taking wider revenge, Ulster will face both security and political crises which could test the peace process to its limit.

Bloody Sunday apology unlikely

Downing Street last night damped down hopes by the Irish government and Sinn Féin leaders, who met Tony Blair yesterday, of an early apology over Bloody Sunday and a fresh public inquiry.

The Prime Minister's official spokesman made it clear the expected announcement by Mr Blair would not be coming tomorrow and cast doubt on whether it could be made in time for the anniversary of the killings on 30 January.

Bertie Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister, told Mr Blair of the need for an independent inquiry when they spoke by telephone on Friday. The delay will disappoint Dublin, but a source said: "It is better to get it right than get it done quickly."

Martin McGuinness, the Sinn Féin chief negotiator, said last night that the demand for an apology and an inquiry into the shootings in 1972 had been put to the Prime Minister in hour-long talks at Downing Street.

Mr McGuinness said the threat to the peace process was

"grave" but both sides sought to avoid the tit-for-tat killings in Belfast derailing the peace process. The Sinn Féin delegation also made it clear they were staying in the peace talks in spite of registering their objections to the "heads of agreement" document published by Dublin and London last week.

That was enough to give hope to Downing Street that the talks process would go on, in spite of the deepening threat of a slide back into violence caused by the two sectarian killings in Belfast. Mr Blair told Mr Adams before their meeting that people were committing the murders "in the hope they would derail the peace process and none of us are going to let them be successful".

The Prime Minister's office said Mr Adams had expressed an almost identical view and Number Ten insisted that the peace process was "in good shape" in spite of Sinn Féin's objections to the latest document.

— Colin Brown,
Chief Political Correspondent



Jim Guiney: Killed in his Belfast shop by the INLA



Gerry Adams: Sinn Féin are still involved in talks but the IRA have already returned to killing

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6/IN THE COURTS

I was not jumping to any conclusions, says Branson

'Did he say how much he was offering you?'
Branson: 'In so many words, no.'
QC: 'Did he say he was offering you money?'
Branson: 'In so many words, no.'



Public interest: Richard Branson is surrounded by journalists outside the High Court in London yesterday after taking the stand.
Photograph: John Stillwell

Richard Branson yesterday denied that he had jumped to a wrong conclusion over an attempted bribe from a director of Camelot in the run-up to the UK lottery franchise contest. He told the High Court in London he thought tens of thousands of pounds were on offer if he withdrew his rival bid.

Mr Branson, head of the Virgin empire, was adamant that the words he claims were spoken by Guy Snowden, the head of US lottery company Gtech, which holds 22 per cent of Camelot, constituted an attempt to

bribe rather than a "rather crude business proposition".

Richard Ferguson QC for Mr Snowden asked: "Did he say how much he was offering you?"

Mr Branson: "In so many words, no."
Mr Ferguson: "Did he say he was offering you money?"

Mr Branson: "In so many words, no."
He told Mr Justice Morland and the jury he thought that tens of millions of pounds was on offer if he withdrew his rival bid.

He believed that Mr Snowden did not mention a figure to him at a lunch at Mr Branson's home in Holland Park, west London in September 1993 because he got a "very, very clear rebuff".

Mr Ferguson: "You didn't ask what he was offering?"

Mr Branson: "I didn't design to ask how much he was offering."

Mr Ferguson: "You assumed - would that be a fair description of your state of mind?"

Mr Branson: "I didn't assume. I knew absolutely clearly what he was saying."

Mr Branson said he did not ask Mr Snowden whether the money was coming from Gtech, a public company, or from the businessman personally.

"If you start getting into details with a man like that - how much money and so on - I think it is extremely dangerous. I was shocked, surprised, astonished about the proposition itself. I had no wish to hear any more details."

Mr Ferguson: "I suggest you jumped to a conclusion - a wrong conclusion."

Mr Branson: "I think I'm reasonably good at judging people and there is absolutely utterly no doubt whatsoever in my mind what Mr Snowden was saying."

He added: "I've never had any lack of confidence about what happened at that lunch - there are some things in life that are completely clear and that was completely and utterly clear."

Mr Branson, 47, is suing Mr Snowden, Gtech, and its public relations director, Robert Rendine, for claiming he made the bribery allegation when he knew there was insufficient evidence to support it.

Mr Snowden, 52, is suing Mr Branson for making the allegation on a BBC *Panorama* programme in December 1995.

Mr Ferguson said that Mr Snowden's version of the lunch was that it got off to a

friendly start, with him being complimentary about Mr Branson's achievements. He claimed Mr Branson made it clear that the government would have to award him - Mr Branson - the franchise and that no other group would have a chance.

Mr Branson: "I wouldn't have been so preoccupied as to say anything like that."

Mr Ferguson said that Mr Snowden made it abundantly clear that whether Mr Branson gave all his profits to charity or not, as he planned, was not so important as he believed. The important thing was to achieve operating efficiency and low operating costs.

Mr Branson said he did not remember Mr Snowden saying that even a 13 per cent figure for operating costs was not easily achievable. He also denied that Mr Snowden had told him that he needed a com-

munications network and computer experts and that it was too late for him to be starting from scratch.

Mr Ferguson: "Did Mr Snowden make it abundantly clear to you that membership of his consortium was closed?"

Mr Branson: "Quite the reverse."
Mr Ferguson suggested to Mr Branson that towards the end of lunch, Mr Snowden said "words to the effect that there must be some benefit in it for you which he was not seeing".

Mr Branson: "He didn't say anything like that."

Mr Ferguson: "And he asked you whether there was something he was missing."

Mr Branson: "No, he didn't say anything like that."

Mr Ferguson: "I suggest to you that that was the turning point in the lunch and after Mr Snowden had asked you that question - 'Is there something that I'm missing here?' - the mood in the lunch changed and the atmosphere changed."

Mr Branson: "That's pure fabrication."

Mr Ferguson: "And you started talking about yourself and your charitable ambitions and so forth."

Mr Branson: "That's absolutely not correct."

Mr Ferguson: "I suggest to you and make it as clear as I possibly can that at no time during the course of that lunch did Mr Snowden make any bribe offer or attempted bribe to you."

Mr Branson: "I can say that is categorically not true."

The entrepreneur denied that he envisaged himself on television presenting lottery cheques to charities. "One thing I appreciated was that if you did something 'worthy', there was enormous danger of getting criticism from the cynical side of the press, so I would have been extremely careful to have kept myself out of the limelight. That is why this was not a Virgin venture."

"If you are in business and you are capable of doing something like raising maybe a billion extra pounds for charity, that is something worth doing."

"Maybe I would have felt good personally, slept well for doing it, but self-aggrandisement was not behind my bid."

Allason tells court of 'revolting slur'

Author and former Tory MP Rupert Allason yesterday asked a High Court jury to award him damages over references to him in a diary based on BBC's *Have I Got News For You* programme.

A reference in the book to his opposition to the Maastricht treaty and his refusal to support the Government in a Commons no confidence vote on the issue was a "vicious and revolting slur" on his reputation, he claimed.

That opposition, Mr Allason said, reflected his determination to stick to his guns and keep his promise to his Tory constituents and political supporters. He did not deserve to be defamed by people who

thought it was clever to sneer at those in public life. But the publishers of *Have I Got News For You* insisted that the book was light-hearted and funny, like the television programme.

Mr Allason, 45, is conducting his own case. The defendants, publishers BBC Worldwide Ltd and Hat Trick Productions, deny libel, pleading fair comment on a matter of public interest.

The diary, published in December 1996, contained a photograph of Mr Allason with the caption: "The maverick Tory MP, when he is writing spy novels, is called Nigel West, and when he is fighting against his own government is called something quite unprintable. Indeed, given Mr Allason's

fondness for pursuing libel actions, there are also excellent legal reasons for not referring to him as a conniving little shit."

"This is not a jolly joke," Mr Allason told the jury. "As you look through the book, you will see there are rogues and scoundrels, Robert Maxwell included, but there is nothing that comes as close as this vile description, which I utterly refuse."

He accepted that *Have I Got News For You* was a "robust" satirical programme, but he rejected the defence argument that only those who knew about the show would read the book and that no one would think any the worse of him. His stance over Maastricht drew no criticism from other politicians, he said,

and the description of him in the book was entirely unjustified.

He was "all for humorous satire", but the book "goes far beyond what is reasonable and acceptable".

Mr Allason asked for damages to "punish the arrogance of staff who ignore legitimate complaints and a [BBC] management that allows them to do so, and to ensure that ... editors consider carefully before trampling over hard-won reputations".

Defence counsel Charles Gray QC said the publishers would argue that no reasonable reader would find the words defamatory in the light of the programme's light-hearted repartee.

The hearing was adjourned until today.



Harper: lost daughter

Hypnotism link to daughter's death

A call was made in the High Court in London yesterday for a fresh investigation into whether there was any possible connection between a woman being hypnotised on stage and her death hours later.

The plea came as Sharron Tabern's mother launched a challenge against an inquest verdict that her daughter died of natural causes. Margaret Harper, of Station Bank, near Preston, is seeking a judicial review and an order forcing a new inquiry into the death.

Mrs Harper's barrister, William Rose, told Lord Justice Simon Brown, sitting with Mr Justice Mance: "There is evidence in other cases of sub-

jects suffering an adverse reaction to stage hypnosis which may have some bearing on the death of this young woman." Mrs Harper, who helped to launch a campaign for a ban on stage hypnosis, believes a suggestion that her daughter would receive a 10,000-volt shock could have been responsible for her death, because she was terrified of electricity.

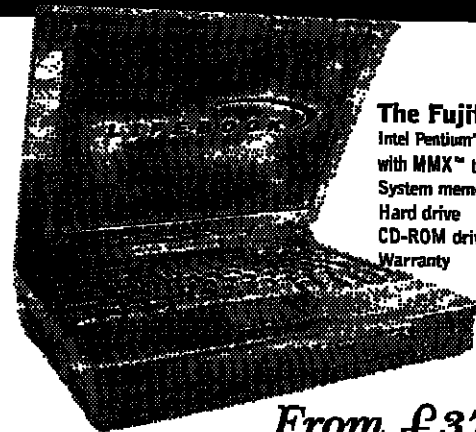
She died in bed in September 1993 hours after being put in a trance by hypnotist Andrew Vincent at Roebuck public house in Leyland, Lancs. She was healthy, and died two weeks before her 25th birthday. She volunteered to be hyp-

notised and did a number of harmless acts. She was brought out of the trance after it was suggested she was receiving a 10,000-volt shock. She had been drinking, but Lancashire coroner Michael McCann formed the opinion the amount was insufficient by itself to provide an answer as to why she had died, said Mr Rose. Her heart stopped due to congestion in her lungs after she inhaled vomit. Mr Rose suggested hypnotism could alter or suppress a person's mental condition or reflexes, including the coughing reflex to eject vomit from the lungs. The hearing was adjourned to today.

Hague a stop to foreign

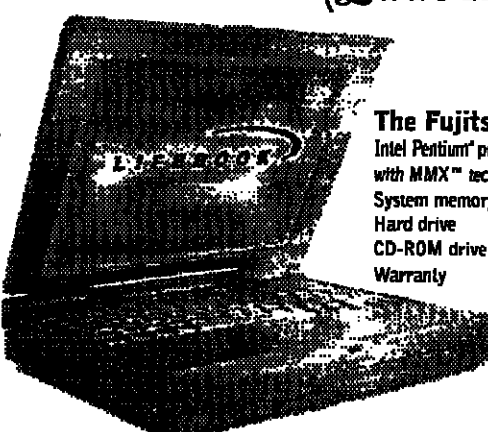
The two Ma brothers trafficking charges Ma Sik-yo died in Ma Sik-chun, who is given the Tories dare return home, son is one of the the world. The thread of a web police, politicians, the colonial author

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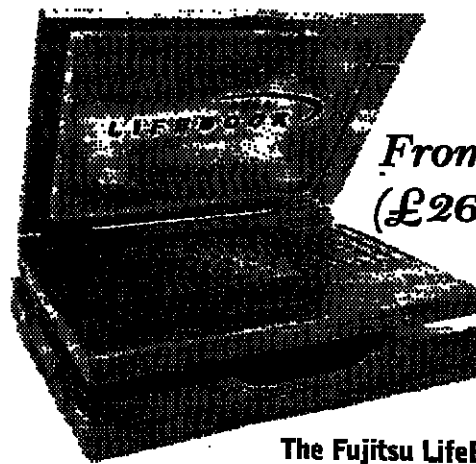
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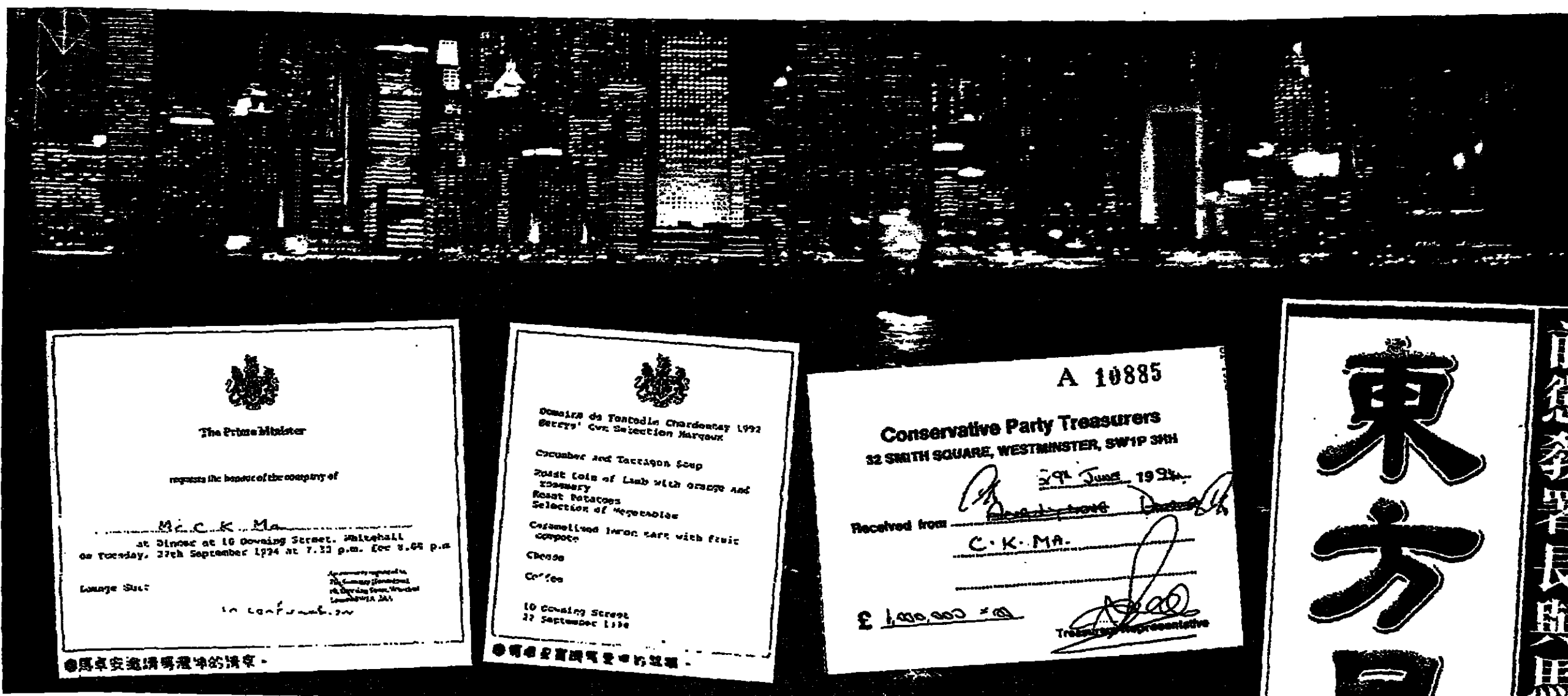
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7/TORY SCANDAL

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY 30 JANUARY 1998
7



Main photograph: Tom Pilton

An Oriental family tale of drugs, corruption and exile

The two Ma brothers fled drug-trafficking charges in Hong Kong. Ma Sik-yo died in exile in Taiwan; Ma Sik-chun, who is said to have given the Tories £1m, does not dare return home, even though his son is one of the richest men in the world. Steve Boggan follows the thread of a web tangled by corrupt police, politicians, the media and the colonial authorities.

Ma Sik-chun, 59, the alleged £1m donor to the Conservative Party, fled from Hong Kong in 1978 while on bail facing charges of heroin and opium trafficking on a huge scale. Today, his son, Ma Ching-kwan (CK

Ma), is one of the richest men in the world, a billionaire at the head of a respectable publishing and property empire. Yet he is powerless in the face of the warrant that will greet Ma senior should he risk returning to Hong Kong from his exile in Taiwan.

In 1991, Ma senior's brother, Ma Sik-yu, better known in Hong Kong as "White Powder Ma" died in Taiwan at the end of a lonely exile. He, too, was a fugitive from heroin-trafficking charges and it is his fate that CK Ma fears may now await his father.

Ma Sik-yu had escaped the clutches of the police after being tipped off in 1977. Ma Sik-chun was not so lucky. He remained in Hong Kong and was picked up by the police, along with four alleged accomplices. At the time, the police narcotics bureau boasted that they had smashed the largest drug syndicate ever to operate in Hong Kong.

Ma Sik-chun faced charges of opium trafficking and heroin dealing on a breath-taking scale. The principal witness against him was Ng Sik-ho, a notorious triad and drug trafficker, better known as "Limp Ho". Like the Ma brothers, he became the subject of a lurid film supposedly detailing his activities.

Police corruption was still rife in the Seventies and police involvement in the narcotics trade was extensive. A trial could well have caused embarrassment among the so-called law enforcers. Ma Sik-chun was granted bail and the following month, despite supposedly being under round-the-clock police surveillance, he slipped out of Hong Kong aboard a small boat and made for Taiwan. On arrival he was promptly arrested for illegal entry but freed in less than a year. Taiwan has no extradition treaty with

Hong Kong and is the home of many of the corrupt officers who escaped the big crack-down on police corruption in the Eighties. Mr Ma still lives in Taipei, and cannot leave if he wishes to avoid arrest. He has suffered some serious health problems but maintains business activities and is closely in touch with affairs in Hong Kong. Under Hong Kong law he remains a fugitive from justice. The charges filed almost two decades ago have not been withdrawn.

Meanwhile, the Ma family's publishing empire has grown and the flagship company, the Oriental Press Group, is listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange.

Ma Sik-chun's eldest son, Ma Ching-kwan, has been active in cultivating relations with major political leaders. Among those with whom he has been associated are former United States presidents

George Bush and Ronald Reagan and the former Australian prime minister Paul Keating.

The extraordinary allegations made in yesterday's edition of the *Oriental Daily News* came after days of lengthy reports in the newspaper alleging harassment and a co-ordinated effort to undermine and damage the Ma family and its newspaper business. These reports make a wide number of allegations against the former colonial authorities, in particular Chris Patten, then governor of Hong Kong, and his senior officials.

The Oriental Press Group started running the articles after it failed to win an appeal in Hong Kong's High Court concerning a dispute with its bitter rival, the *Apple Daily*. The appeal judge Mr Justice Godfrey was then subject to sustained

abuse in the paper and put under 24-hour "surveillance" by a team of *Oriental Daily News* reporters, to teach him a lesson. This action evoked a storm of protest from journalistic and legal organisations in Hong Kong. These protests were cited as evidence of the conspiracy against the Oriental group. It is the largest newspaper publisher in Hong Kong and has substantial property interests in Britain.

Yesterday, when asked whether it had been wise for the Conservative Party to accept money from the Ma family, Mr Patten said: "That is a question you will have to put to Conservative Central Office."

Asked whether he would have accepted donations from the family when he was party chairman, he replied: "That is a hypothetical question, and good politicians never answer hypothetical questions."

Hague put a stop to foreign gifts

The Commons outcry over Labour's receipt of a £1m donation from Bernie Ecclestone, and the subsequent government retreat on tobacco sponsorship for Formula One racing, will now rebound with a vengeance on the Conservatives.

With the Government facing difficulties over welfare reform, and the strain in relations between Tony Blair and the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, Labour will jump at the chance of a legitimate diversion - a return to the sleaze territory that served them so well in the run-up to the election landslide.

Tory fundraising is now more controlled since the donation was made in 1994. William Hague promised, as soon as he became leader, that overseas donations to the party were to be stopped, pending legislation to outlaw them completely.

But Lord Neill's Committee on Standards in Public Life has given all parties until the end of this month to provide him with a breakdown - of all donations received since 1992. While Lord Neill has rejected Mr Blair's suggestion that the names of all post-1992 donors should be made available in confidence to the Neill committee, the parties have been asked to break donations down by source and size, with numbers of donors giving more than £5,000; £5,000 to £10,000; and then in £10,000 bands up to £100,000; followed by bands of £100,000 up to and beyond £1m.

Lord Neill said last month: "I hope that the parties will be able to give us these sort of ball-park figures fairly quickly, without breaching any confidences which they may in the past have offered to donors." The Conservatives have yet to deliver.

A spokesman for the Neill committee said yesterday that when public hearings started in April, there would be no question of any party leader, chairman or treasurer being asked about detailed allegations. But the latest Hong Kong charge will add fuel to questions about the principle of foreign donations, and questions on inducements for policy action, or honours recommendations.

Among questions already put by Lord Neill, in a consultation paper published last month, were: "Is it the case that an individual or organisation can purchase... access to decision-makers? Is this right? How should a 'foreign' donation be defined? Is it improper for political parties to accept donations from foreign individuals domiciled here, or from the United Kingdom subsidiaries of foreign-owned companies?"

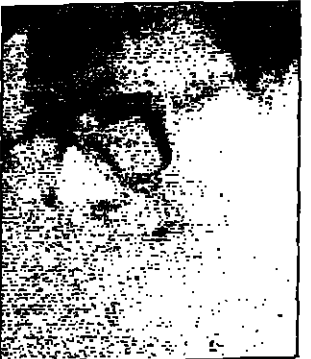
— Anthony Bevins, Political Editor



Asil Nadir: Gave £440,000 to the Tory party



Fayed: Gave £250,000, and later released cash-for-questions details



Li Ka Shing: Hong Kong baron donated £900,000



John Latsis: Shipping magnate gave £500,000

History of doubtful donations

Although the Tories are loath to admit it, they know that some of the donations made to the party in the past - particularly from foreign benefactors - were unwisely accepted at times of deep financial crisis.

Yesterday, the party's old policy of keeping all donors secret caused fresh embarrassment. Even though they may have wished to rubbish the Ma family's claims, they were powerless to do so: a spokesman said the party was not allowed to discuss any gifts made before Mr Hague's ascendancy.

In future, all donations over £5,000 will be made public, as the Labour Party's already are.

Of all the foreign donations, the one that has haunted the Tories the most - until today - was the £440,000 given by Asil Nadir, the Cypriot businessman who fled the UK following the collapse of his Polly Peck empire amid allegations of fraud.

Despite Mr Nadir's refusal to return to Britain from northern Cyprus to face the charges, the Tories have steadfastly refused to return the donation. A spokesman said yesterday that its provenance was in dispute.

Octav Botnar, the former boss of Nissan UK, gave £90,000 to the party before the Inland Revenue linked him with a £139m tax swindle.

Others have been involved in no wrongdoing but their unmasking as donors has either caused embarrassment or raised questions over their motives for giving money to the party that was in power.

Hong Kong has long been a big source of Tory party money. Following research by Labour's Stephen Byers while the Conservatives were still in power, it emerged that other donors to the Tories were Sir YK Pao, head of Wharf Holdings, who gave £1m and Li Ka Shing, who donated £900,000. Peter Woo, Pao's successor at Wharf Holdings, gave £200,000 in 1994.

Before the 1992 General Election, John Latsis, the Greek shipping magnate, was reported to have given £500,000, a figure confirmed by Lord McAlpine, a former party treasurer. Following the election, it is understood Mr Latsis gave further amounts totalling £1.5m. Graham Kirkwood, a businessman knighted last year by the Tories, gave a "soft loan" of £1m.

Mohamed Al-Fayed, the owner of Harrods, gave the party £250,000. Mr Fayed was anxious to be granted British citizenship. After the Conservatives' failure to embrace him to their bosom, the Egyptian released details of the cash-for-questions scandal.

— Steve Boggan

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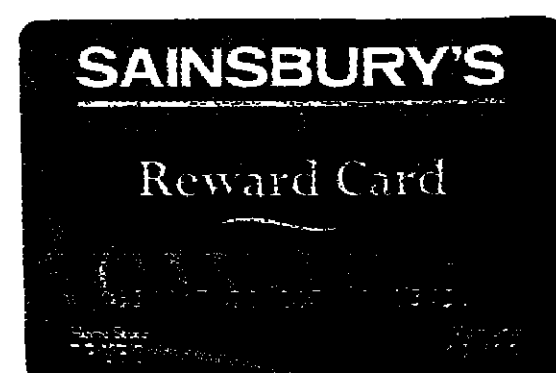
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صلى الله عليه وسلم

Preso

A tax on greenfields is under consideration, says Deputy Prime Minister Prescott, has disclosed Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, he to stop the development of Newcastl

House building and
Britain's random cities
in 1950, a year pump-

Labour Brown-

Peter Mandelson yesterday pulled out of a BBC radio interview to avoid questions about relations between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor. **Coin Brown**, Chief Political Correspondent, says **Norman Lamont** was "sure" they would have to "take" or risk real damage.

A campaign effort was made by ministers and "spin doctors" yesterday to end the speculation about a link between Cameron and Tony Blair as it threatened to put out of control.

Mr. Hagan, who was in
sels for an important
pean Union meeting. He
aside questions about the
leged on saying he would
be on the scene. The
business of government.

Peter Mandelstam, the Soviet poet, was arrested without preliminary reference to the First Instance Court, although it became clear he would be interviewed in the relationship between Richard and Mr. H. and

After the children were
Brown started to go away
telling them to go away
them. Mr. Smith's
sister was a woman who

Straw the no

Government hopes to resolve a long-standing question about corrupt MPs will be put to Parliament by the Home Secretary today. **Author** Bevns, Political **Editor** reports on a parliamentary "nightmare"

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Prescott proposes Green Belt tax to fund city housing

A tax on greenfield development is under consideration, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, has disclosed. But, says Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, he has chosen not to stop the development of a swathe of Newcastle's Green Belt.

House building and refurbishment in Britain's rundown cities could have an extra £250m a year pumped into it. The mon-

ey would be raised by a tax on building homes on greenfield sites outside cities, towns and villages, says the Civic Trust, a leading regeneration pressure group.

Next week, the trust's director, Michael Gwilliam, will present his proposal when he meets ministers at the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

John Prescott, the department's secretary of state, has told *The Independent* he is looking at how taxation could discourage greenfield development and shift more private sector housebuilding inside towns and cities.

The Civic Trust proposes that the tax would be paid by a development company whenever the local council granted it planning permission for building houses on an open, green site.

The tax would be imposed on the difference between the value of the land as farmland and its much higher value with planning permission for housing. But the regional average for these two values would be used, rather than the actual values for the site in question.

The Civic Trust said the tax should be set at a maximum of 17.5 per cent – the same as VAT – and like VAT be collected

by Customs and Excise. But the money would be given to the new Regional Development Authorities which the Government is setting up. These would have to spend it on subsidising housing projects – both private and public sector – which regenerate towns and cities from within.

The trust accepts that housebuilding on the countryside around urban areas is bound to continue. The demand is so great that the cities could never absorb all of the growth.

But the tax ought to slow it down, by making greenfield sites – and therefore the houses eventually built on them – more

expensive. At the same time, the subsidies available from its revenue ought to make the often more costly and difficult option of building homes on derelict or underused land within towns and cities more attractive.

It calculates that with a 10 per cent rate the tax would raise £250m a year, equivalent to the entire budget of the Government's leading regeneration body, English Partnerships, and one quarter of what the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions now spends on regeneration.

Meanwhile, England is set to lose another 500 hectares of Green Belt land fol-

lowing Mr Prescott's decision last week not to intervene to stop one of the biggest ever eruptions of Green Belt, west of Stevenage in Hertfordshire.

And tomorrow, the final version of Newcastle City Council's latest Unitary Development Plan – a strategic blueprint for the city – comes into force. It sanctions the building of more than 2,000 homes and industry on Green Belt land north of the city.

Green Belts were created in order to stop cities sprawling and merging with other settlements. Conservation groups had appealed to Mr Prescott to use his powers to intervene, but he declined.

Labour rush to fix Brown-Blair rift

Peter Mandelson yesterday pulled out of a BBC radio interview to avoid questions about relations between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor. Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, says Norman Lamont warned they would have to "cool it" or risk real damage.

A concerted effort was made by ministers and "spin doctors" yesterday to end the speculation of a rift between Gordon Brown and Tony Blair as it threatened to run out of control.

Mr Brown, who was in Brussels for an important European Union meeting, brushed aside questions about the alleged rift saying he would not be diverted from the serious business of government.

Peter Mandelson, the minister without portfolio, refused to go on the BBC lunchtime news when it became clear he would be interviewed about the relationship between Mr Blair and Mr Brown.

After a weekend in which Mr Brown's friends were accused of "letting their egos run away with them", Mr Blair's official spokesman dismissed the re-

ports as "silly" and said: "That doesn't diminish or change the Prime Minister's view of the Chancellor – that he is an extremely excellent Chancellor for whom he has immense regard professionally and personally."

The spokesman also described as "shallow" the Brown biography by Paul Routledge, the political correspondent of the *Independent on Sunday*, which sparked the controversy.

Behind the denials lies a real fear that unless it is stopped now, there could be real damage done to the relationship which lies at the core of the Government.

Norman Lamont, the former Tory Chancellor, who had similar experiences with John Major, said: "This is largely exaggerated. It is a little local difficulty but if people go on talking it up, and taking pot shots at each other, it will become real. They have to cool it."

Downing Street compared the reports of the rift, allegedly over Mr Brown's grudge about being outmanoeuvred by Mr Blair for the leadership, with the "flavour of the week" speculation about Robin Cook, and his affair with his secretary, and about Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, and how his son was cautioned for allegedly supplying cannabis.



Coming together: Six-year-old Marcel showing off his work as Joan Ruddock, minister for women, and Alan Howarth, childcare minister, visited an after school care club in south London to launch the National Childcare Strategy. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Police chief told to end public row

A public row between a chief constable and a government minister flared up again yesterday when the police chief was urged to end the "slanging match" and get on with his work.

The remarks follow comments by Ian Oliver, chief constable of Grampian Police, who on Sunday described the behaviour of Henry McLeish, the Scottish home affairs minister, as "deplorable" and that comments he had made were "intemperate".

He was responding to Mr McLeish's critical remarks about Dr Oliver's decision to attend a conference in Taiwan as a controversial report was released.

Mr McLeish said last week he was unhappy with Grampian's internal inquiry into the way it handled the investigation into the murder of Scott Simpson, nine, who was strangled by a paedophile.

The war of words continued yesterday when Mr McLeish said there was nothing to be gained "by seeking to indulge Dr Oliver by continuing this public slanging".

In an interview with BBC Scotland, he added: "The key issue is this – a young boy, Scott Simpson, was tragically murdered by Steven Leisk. We want to get to the bottom of what the police investigation involved itself in."

"We want to learn the lessons and I would suggest to the chief constable of Grampian that he now concentrates his energies in ensuring that we get a speedy, successful outcome to that inquiry."

A Grampian Police spokeswoman said Dr Oliver did not wish to comment further. — Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent

Straw tells MPs to grasp the nettle over corruption

Government hopes to resolve a long-standing question about corrupt MPs will be put to Parliament by the Home Secretary today. Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, reports on a parliamentary "nightmare".



Jack Straw: Wants clean-up

More than 20 years after a Royal Commission urged Parliament to consider making corruption, bribery and attempted bribery of an MP a criminal offence, Jack Straw will make another attempt to get a special committee of MPs and peers to grasp the nettle this morning.

But there are strong indications that some senior MPs and peers are continuing a rear-guard action to protect parliamentary privilege – and keep corrupt MPs out of the dock.

No action was taken on the 1976 proposal by the Salmon Commission on Standards of Conduct in Public Life, but the question was again raised by Lord Nolan's 1995 report on Standards in Public Life, when

he recommended that "the Government should now take steps to clarify the law relating to the bribery of, or receipt of a bribe by, a Member of Parliament".

That was followed up by Michael Howard, then Tory home secretary, who issued a discussion paper in December 1996, entitled "Clarification of the law relating to the Bribery of Members of Parliament". That document was sent to the Commons Committee on Standards and Privileges, but it appears that it took no action.

Shortly after the May elec-

tion, however, Mr Straw issued his own paper, "The Prevention of Corruption", in which he asked for parliamentary views. The Home Office said it planned to determine whether and how to amend the law on corruption early in 1998.

But a joint Lords and Commons committee on parliamentary privilege only started taking evidence last month – and it appears that its inquiry is largely focused on the much broader question of parliamentary privilege, under which corrupt MPs can be protected from criminal proceedings.

An official advertisement in yesterday's *Independent* said: "Parliament wants your views. A joint committee of both Houses of Parliament chaired by a Law Lord [Lord Nicholls of Birkenhead] is looking at what special rights members of Parliament need to carry out their duties, e.g. freedom of speech, freedom to regulate their own affairs."

There is no mention of making parliamentary corruption a criminal offence.

The public is asked to submit views by 16 March. On that basis, it is possible that the inquiry

will not be completed until the end of the year – unless Mr Straw can persuade the committee to examine corruption before it turns to the modernisation of parliamentary privilege.

Meanwhile, the Commons Committee on Standards and Privileges has opened an inquiry of its own, on setting up a fully-fledged appeal procedure for MPs who, like Neil Hamilton, dispute the findings of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.

Of 24 questions now being posed by the committee, only one addresses the question put more than 20 years ago by Lord Salmon: in 1975 by Lord Nolan: in 1996 by Mr Howard; and again, last year, by Mr Straw: "Would the transfer to the criminal courts of corruption allegations lessen the need for an appeal system designed for highly complex cases?"

One senior parliamentary source said yesterday that the whole situation was a mess, and sorting it out was a "nightmare", but it was possible that Mr Straw's evidence this morning might yet persuade the joint committee to make a recommendation.

Kite mark demand for overseas courses

Universities and colleges which want to open courses overseas should be asked to meet a "kite mark" quality standard, a committee of MPs said last night. The recommendation came amid severe criticism of a Welsh higher education institute which opened courses in eight countries.

The Public Accounts Committee said the Swansea Institute of Higher Education's arrangements for monitoring the courses were "seriously flawed".

Although the courses in Kenya, Malaysia, Brunei, Finland, China, Spain, Greece and

Indonesia brought in at least £400,000 per year, they could have proved more profitable still. The institute's former principal, Gerald Stockdale, spent £25,000 on 18 trips to Kenya which generated just £28,000.

When he resigned after revelations about the institute's overseas activities, Dr Stockdale received a settlement of £118,921. The committee was "concerned" about this, and about the fact that Dr Stockdale's deputy was suspended on full pay for eight months before being dismissed. After the in-

stitute launched a postgraduate diploma in business management in Malaysia, the report said, certificates were printed locally and it was not clear whether all had been accounted for. Both the committee and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales had agreed this lack of control was "a dereliction of responsibility".

Higher education institutions are not allowed to use public funds to run overseas courses, and it was "troubling" that accounting systems at Swansea made it "very difficult" to see

whether taxpayers' money had been properly ring-fenced.

The funding council had suggested that a new quality assurance body, already being set up, should take responsibility for courses being run overseas and should set up a "kite marking" system.

A spokesman for the Swansea Institute said the recommendations on its procedures, first made in a National Audit Office report, had already been implemented.

— Fran Abrams, Westminster Correspondent

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10/ROCK'N'ROLL



Three ages of rock Johnny Hallyday (from left) in concert in the early Nineties; in his Sixties heyday, and as he is today

Photographs: FSP

Pop star's cocaine tale changes French view of the world

Normally *Le Monde* gives little space to sex, drugs and rock'n'roll. But the austere French daily has outraged some readers by publishing a lengthy interview with the perpetual rock star Johnny Hallyday in which he casually admits to taking cocaine. John Lichfield reports.

The controversy falls into three parts. There are the diehard *Le Monde* readers who believe the newspaper should never men-

tion a "chanteur yéyé" like Johnny Hallyday at all. There are more broad-minded readers who were, none the less, astonished to find the newspaper permitting him to make a defence of cocaine and its artistic contribution to rock music.

Thirdly, there are those, like the magazine *Marianne*, who wonder aloud why Johnny Hallyday, 54, friend of President Jacques Chirac and member of the Legion of Honour, has not been prosecuted under France's famously Draconian drugs laws.

"For the same offences, for the same use of drugs, dealers, young people, poor people, citizens from the bottom rungs of society are being deprived of their liberty," the magazine said.

Marianne also demanded to know why, for two weeks, the rock star's comments produced no reaction from the French media. (It was *Le Monde*, to its credit, which broke the silence by admitting that it had been bombarded by complaints from its readers.)

For the rest, said *Marianne*, French journalists ignored Hallyday's confession "for one simple reason... coke is also their secret." Since the Eighties, according to the magazine, use of cocaine has been widespread among French journalists, television personalities, lawyers, actors and writers.

"Cocaine is fun, sociable and useful: it gets rid of women's inhibitions and convinces men that they have sexual endurance."

Johnny Hallyday (like *Le Monde*) is a French institution. He claims to have introduced France to rock music in 1959 and has remained popular, and active, ever since, without ever becoming successful abroad.

Unlike Hallyday, *Le Monde* is an institution which has found it necessary to change its tune, a little, over time. Although still uncompromisingly excellent in its coverage of politics and

world events, the newspaper has broadened its range in recent years and now includes such novelties as a sports page. Even so, the two-page spread on Johnny Hallyday, launching his new record and a series of live concerts in France, was a startling departure.

The rock star spoke, rather movingly, of his early life and his unreliable Belgian father before describing his experiences with drugs.

He made it clear that he had come to rely on cocaine as a tool of his trade "to work, to start up the machine, to stand the pace... I'm not proud of it... but you have to remember that our songs come from somewhere. They don't fall off the Christmas tree."

The passage appeared in the interview without any comment or criticism by the newspaper. There has been a lively debate in France recently about the decriminalisation of drugs, but this has mostly been concerned with soft drugs, such as cannabis.

It is widely recognised that the problems with violence and unemployment in the "quartiers difficiles", or sink suburbs, of many French cities have been worsened by the increasing presence of hard drugs, mostly heroin but also cocaine.

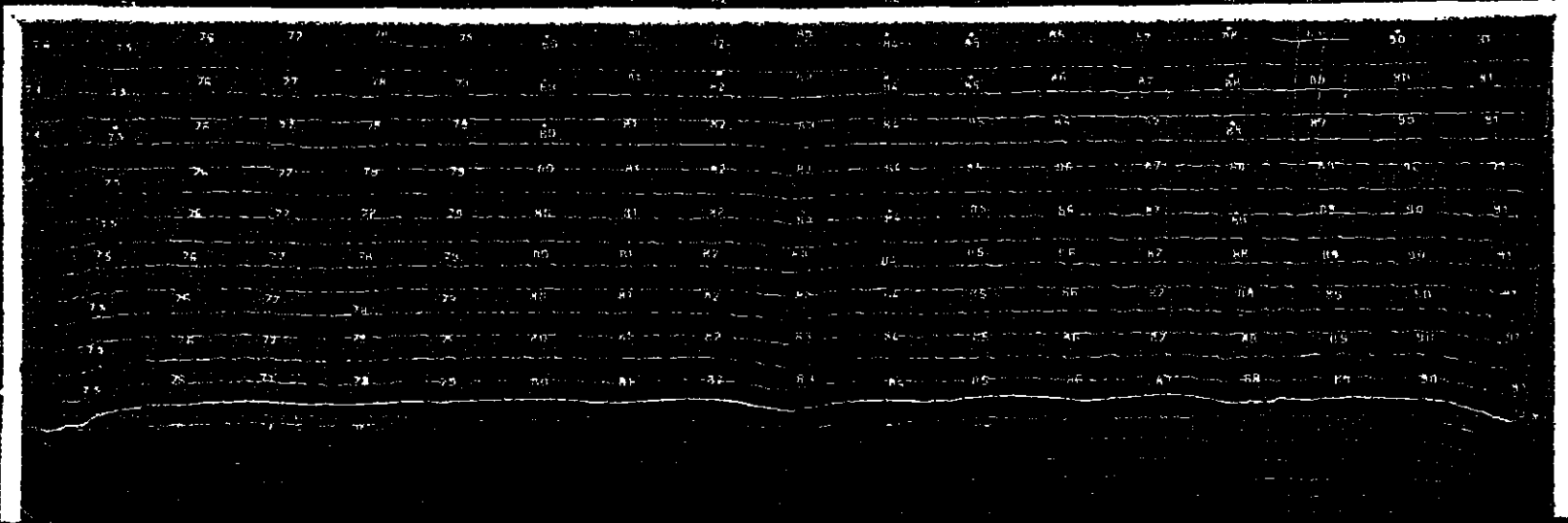
"Imagine the reaction of the police and the justice system," wrote one angry *Le Monde* reader, "if the user of drugs was called Mohammed and lived in the Neuhoof [a trouble district] in Strasbourg."

The newspaper's ombudsman, Thomas Ferenzi, rejected the criticism. He said the article accurately reflected the realities of the rock business: it did not reflect the newspaper's opinion on drugs.

Another reader, however, punning on the newspaper's title, wrote: "Adieu, *Monde*, cruel, j'abandonne" which translates roughly as: "Goodbye cruel World, I'm cancelling my subscription".

SPOT THE BALL

Where is everybody?



Forever young: Hallyday and his fifth wife, Laetitia Boudou, 21, at their wedding in March 1996 Photograph: AP

'I'm not proud of it... that's the way it is'

Johnny Hallyday made his confession earlier this month in a sprawling two-page interview, incorporating something else rare in *Le Monde* - a photograph.

The singer, 39 years in the business, spoke of his sense of being a rock dinosaur. "There's just me and Mick Jagger left," he said.

Many of his fellow rock originals had become "petits-bourgeois", who had sold out to "sugariness". Others, like "my friend" Jimi Hendrix and "my friend" Brian Jones, were dead. Both died from drugs overdoses.

"Myself, I'm like one of those mortally ill people who

keep on fighting just so as not to die."

Johnny (né Jean-Philippe Smet) then launched into a long description, and defence, of the place of drugs in rock music. "Cocaine, yes, for a long time I used to take it when I fell out of bed in the morning. That's finished now. I take it in order to work, to start up the machine, to stand the pace. I'm not the only one, either. Powder and hash are everywhere amongst musicians... I'm not proud of it. But that's the way it is."

"You have to remember that our songs come from somewhere. They don't fall off the Christmas tree."

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Serb on tr
over mure

Vukovar's former Serb Slavko Dokmanovic, before the UN war-crimes tribunal, accused of crimes a massacre, protected evoked memories of World War Two. Prosecutors Grahmann accused Mr Dokmanovic of participating in the killing to the death of 198 two women, mostly Croats, has pleaded not guilty to charges including crimes against humanity. He was arrested in June in a covert operation. Reuters, p.1

Single-min

Yves Tassinat de Sigaut, minister for the Economy, has decided not to France's right the checks to concentrate his job on his job. The main responsibility of the single currency, which will be introduced in 2001, is to ensure that the euro is a stable currency. Reuters, p.1

Hutu killing

Hutu rebels attacked a camp of Rwandan refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo, killing 100 people and wounding 100. Reuters, p.1

Chilling less

The number of students who have taken the SATs exam in the UK has fallen by 10 per cent since 1995. The number of students who have taken the exam in the UK has fallen by 10 per cent since 1995. Reuters, p.1

Frog off

A new study has shown that the number of frogs in the UK has fallen by 10 per cent since 1995. The number of frogs in the UK has fallen by 10 per cent since 1995. Reuters, p.1

Wipe out

Unemployment in the UK has fallen by 10 per cent since 1995. The number of people who have been unemployed in the UK has fallen by 10 per cent since 1995. Reuters, p.1

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Serb on trial over murders

Vukovar's former Serb mayor, Slavko Dokmanovic, went before the UN war-crimes tribunal, accused of complicity in a massacre prosecutors said evoked memories of World War Two. Prosecutor Grant Niemann accused Mr Dokmanovic of participating in events leading to the death of 198 men and two women, mostly Croats. He has pleaded not guilty to charges including crimes against humanity. He was arrested in June in a covert operation.

Reuters, the Hague

Single-minded

Yves-Thibault de Silguy, Commissioner for Economic Affairs, has decided not to run in France's regional elections so as to concentrate fully on his EU job. The man responsible for steering the single currency to completion had run into criticism at the EU over his plan to run in a regional poll in March in Brittany, where he is from.

Reuters, Brussels

Hutu killings

Hutu rebels attacked a bus carrying brewery workers in north-western Rwanda, killing 35 people and wounding 35. The private Rwanda News Agency said the attackers reportedly attempted to separate Hutus from Tutsis, but without success.

AP, Kigali

Chilling lesson

Thousands of students went back to schools and universities in Montreal that reopened yesterday after a severe ice storm. A half million people throughout Quebec remained without power for a 14th day. 3,000 electricians worked to restore electricity. About 95,000 students in the worst-affected areas around Montreal will be out of school another week.

AP, Montreal

Frog off

A New York court dismissed a lower-court ruling that the Bad Frog brewing firm could not feature an image on its bottle labels of a frog with finger raised in the "F*** off" gesture because it was offensive. The labels were protected by the First Amendment on free speech.

David Osborne, New York

Wipe out

Undersized waves and a shark scare forced postponement of a nude surfing competition, part of the Sydney Fringe Festival.

AP, Sydney



Holy water: An Orthodox priest in Minsk dipping a cross into a tank to bless water yesterday, in celebration of Epiphany, as people wait to fill containers; 80 per cent of Belarusians are Orthodox and will store a year's supply of the blessed water Photograph: Vasily Fedosenko/Reuters

China tells Cook that UN can visit

China told Robin Cook yesterday that it would welcome a visit by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Teresa Poole. In Peking considers what results the overture will yield.

It was Qian Qichen, the Chinese foreign minister, who raised the subject of human rights during four hours of discussions and dinner with Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary. Eager to emphasise the "fresh start" to Sino-British relations, Mr Qian took the opportunity to announce that the Chinese government "was ready to welcome a visit to China by Mary Robinson [the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights] at any time".

The choice of Mr Cook as the conduit for what Peking regards as a concession to international opinion underlines improved relations between Britain and China since the handover of Hong Kong last year. Yesterday it emerged that Tony Blair's visit to China is scheduled for September.

In a further sign of openness on China's part, the United States Defense Secretary, William Cohen, was given a tour of a secret air defence base.

The invitation to Mrs Robinson contained no details of what access she would be granted, so there is no guarantee that China's conditions would prove acceptable. None the less, Mr Cook welcomed the offer. It was also agreed that the dialogue between the European Union and China on human rights would reconvene in Peking next month and again in May.

Today, over lunch with a Chinese vice-foreign minister, Mr Cook will raise the EU list of

about a dozen jailed dissidents. China rarely responds to such lists, which are presented regularly by Western politicians without securing releases.

Mr Cook told Mr Qian he wanted Sino-British relations to proceed on a "wide road", a message he will reiterate in a meeting with President Jiang Zemin today. The United Kingdom spokesman said human rights was one element of a "four-part agenda", which included Hong Kong, international issues such as Iraq and the environment, and UK and EU relations with China, including trade. Mr Cook wants his 24-hour mainland visit to yield progress on an insurance operating licence for Royal and Sun Alliance and more air routes for British carriers.

Mr Cook's brief visit to Peking has coincided with that of Mr Cohen, the US Defense Secretary. Yesterday, Mr Cohen became the first foreigner allowed to tour a secret Chinese regional air defence command centre in Peking, which US officials said was a "breakthrough" in building trust between the two countries. Until this month, the Chinese had denied that the site existed.

Later in the day, Mr Cohen secured reassurances from his counterpart, General Chi Haotian, that China would not sell anti-ship cruise missiles to Iran.

Despite an atmosphere designed to promote greater openness between the two countries' military establishments, Mr Cohen's underlying message in a speech at the Academy of Military Sciences was tough. He said China's willingness to cooperate with the US would largely determine the future of security in Asia. "We can work together toward our common interest, or we can work against each other," Mr Cohen said. "The United States will succeed on either path."

Mugabe backs down on threat to grab white land

The plan by President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe to confiscate 1,400 white-owned farms has been halted - probably indefinitely - by conditions imposed on new loans by the World Bank and the European Union.

For months Mr Mugabe, whose government's popularity has slumped to an all-time low, had been threatening a mass land-grab after the May harvest, with little or no compensation for owners.

In Zimbabwe, 18 years after

independence from Britain, commercial farms remain in white hands while poor blacks are still landless. Reform is admittedly long overdue but Mr Mugabe has been using the issue as a smokescreen for the political and economic failures which have sparked unprecedented mass protests in the past few months.

Even the most ardent land reformers said the crude measures proposed by Mr Mugabe - takeover by force and redistribution to landless peasants -

would spell economic disaster for the country. The government has no funds to invest in machinery or to train black farmers, who generally have no experience of anything other than subsistence farming.

It appears rhetoric finally gave way to hard economic realities at the weekend, when the beleaguered government persuaded the World Bank to release \$60m (£36.5m) and the European Union to release \$20m of frozen budget support.

In return, the government

pledged to respect the constitution, which guarantees compensation to those affected by land reform.

The promise contradicts Mr Mugabe's recent threats to ignore the constitution on the issue. Crucially, the government has also promised not to push the budget deficit beyond 8.2 per cent of the gross national product, an undertaking which also seems to torpedo the land grab.

Mr Mugabe was caught between a rock and a hard place.

Zimbabwe badly needs outside investment. The Zimbabwe dollar is in freefall; its difficulties are at least partly due to the uncertainty surrounding the land threats.

Implications of the loan conditions became public as more than a thousand people again took to the streets of Harare yesterday in protest at price rises. As riot police tear-gassed and baton-charged the people, the government blamed whites for the country's problems.

— Mary Braid, Johannesburg

US students raped by Guatemalan gunmen

Gunmen ambushed a bus carrying 16 American college students and teachers in Guatemala. Marched at gunpoint to a nearby sugar cane field, all were robbed and five were raped during the 90-minute assault.

The students were on the

last day of a tour of Mayan ruins. Guatemalan police later detained two men.

The crime, last Friday, seemed certain to hurt tourism in Guatemala, favoured by backpackers attracted by its Mayan culture. The Foreign Office warns

travellers to beware. "Violent crime is common throughout Guatemala," it says. "Muggers are often well armed. Visitors should be alert at all times, and not travel alone, especially at night. Armed attacks on long-distance and city buses are common."

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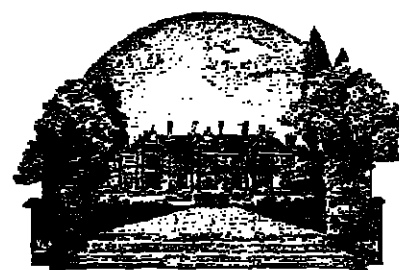
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EU visit to Algiers skims surface of the killing fields

A European Union delegation, led by Foreign Office minister Derek Fatchett, flew into Algiers last night for talks today with politicians and newspaper editors. Algeria says it wants help in a war against 'terrorists'. But, reports Steve Crawshaw, the EU wants to keep the conflict at arms length.

More massacres were reported yesterday across the country, in what now passes for Algerian normality. In the rabbit-warren of steep streets and alleyways of the old Casbah district of Algiers, three more people were shot. They are the latest in a wave of massacres that has taken the lives of more than 1,100 men, women and children in the past three weeks.

Today's talks, by Mr Fatchett and his counterparts from Austria and Luxembourg (the present, future and past holders of the European Union presidency), are intended to show that Europe is getting serious about the problems of Algeria. But Europe has no intention of getting too deeply embroiled.

On the Algerian side, expectations are clear. The authorities want the EU to support what the government insists is a straightforward war with Islamic terrorists. The main front-page headline in the pro-government *El Moudjahid* newspaper yesterday warned the European troika to "avoid misunderstandings and disillusion". It demanded "more efficient co-operation", and complained of the EU's "chilly attitude" towards "the battle that we have fought for the past six years against barbaric terrorism".

Other commentators hint, by contrast, that the EU might have been tougher. *Le Matin* newspaper argued that "too many things remain unspoken" in the EU mission, and quoted Mr Fatchett's insistence in a BBC radio interview that, while there was "a need for candour, that's not pointing the finger at anyone in the Algerian government for responsibility". It pointed out: "For Europe, the responsibility for the massacres is not as clear as the authorities suggest."

The EU mission may, if all goes well, provide some seeds of hope. Some Algerians argue that it could pave the way for future, more substantial missions, including perhaps one by a United Nations rapporteur - an idea which the Algerian government brusquely rejected when it was first mooted last year. The authorities' repeated failure to respond adequately to the

massacres has led to questions inside and outside Algeria about whether elements within the government or security forces share complicity. In a report published at the end of last year, Amnesty International, which has repeatedly been refused permission to conduct an investigation, argued that the international community had "shunned its responsibilities in the face of a tragedy which takes place in camera".

Tens of thousands of Algerians have died in the past few years. Most of the worst killings take place in the countryside, where massacres have become gruesome routine. Reports of the massacres are never official, but are reported in the press, on the basis of *bonnes sources*. Islamic terrorists are always blamed, but they remain invisible, allegedly hunted down and shot. There are no open trials where the voices of the alleged murderers might be heard. Torture and disappearances of those hostile to the government are agreed to be widespread.

Today's talks can be little more than a skimming of the surface of the problem. The ministerial troika will meet the Algerian prime minister and foreign minister, a group of newspaper editors and a group of opposition politicians before flying out again this afternoon. The Europeans hope that a fuller fact-finding mission will follow. The Algerians, by contrast, are more concerned to get the troublesome Europeans on-side, or off their backs.

Paradoxically, the Algerian refusal until now to co-operate with the international community in any way has meant that Algerian complicity may have been overstated rather than understated. Many Algerians agree that violence by the Islamic radicals is a serious problem. But they argue that the government's attempts at cover-up only make the problems worse.

Omar Belhouche, editor of *El Watan* newspaper, said that it was wrong to "let the Islamists off the hook". But he called for much greater government openness. "It's a question of democracy. We must make them give freedom of the press. That's important. *Le pouvoir* [the authorities] must respect press freedom and human rights. I very much hope that things will change."

For the moment, there is little sign of that. On his office desk, Mr Belhouche has a quotation from Shakespeare: "News fitting to the night, Black, fearful, comfortless and horrible." In Algeria, the quotation seems likely to remain macabrely appropriate.



Heated debate: A home-made American flag is burned by protesters outside the UNSCOM building in Baghdad yesterday as chief UN weapons inspector Richard Butler returned to the city. Photograph: Fahs Kheiber/Reuters

Talks begin on Iraq-UN stand-off

With Iraq seemingly bent on defying the United Nations, the world watched nervously yesterday as negotiations on overcoming the crisis began in Baghdad. But, as David Usborne observes, hopes of a quick resolution are not high.

There was scant sign of any easy way out of the latest confrontation between Iraq and the United Nations yesterday as special UN envoy Richard Butler arrived in Baghdad for two days of crisis talks with government officials.

While sounding a somewhat conciliatory tone before talks with Iraq's foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, Mr Butler rejected a deadline on concluding UN efforts to unearth and dismantle weapons of mass destruction in the country.

Mr Butler, who is chief of the UN Special Commission responsible for unearthing Iraq's suspected chemical, biological and nuclear arms programmes, was responding to a speech made by Saddam Hussein at the weekend. President Saddam indicated that he might place a six-month deadline on the UN inspections ending.

"This work can be done quite quickly with full Iraqi co-operation," Mr Butler told journalists. "To demand that it be finished at a certain stage is a degree of arbitrariness that makes no practical sense."

Technically, Mr Butler is in Baghdad to address two new obstacles raised by Iraq about the inspections. It is continuing to deny inspectors access to "sensitive" presidential sites.

Last week, meanwhile, it sabotaged the work of a team led by former US Marine officer, Scott Ritter.

Iraq is contending both that Mr Ritter was a United States spy and that the composition of the UN team is unreasonably weighed down by Britons and Americans.

While insisting that Iraq has no choice but to abide by UN resolutions and allow unfettered access for the inspectors, he added: "The Council has also said that in bringing about that access, we should find ways to show respect to Iraq's sovereignty, dignity and national security."

While President Saddam appears to be confident that divisions in the Security Council will dissuade the US from taking unilateral military action against him, there were important signs of efforts by Council members to reassert their solidarity, notably from officials in France and China.

Finger of suspicion points to Baghdad after bloody murders in Jordan



Hikmat al-Hajou: Throat was cut

Mystery still surrounds the savage murder of the Iraqi deputy ambassador, two prominent Iraqi businessmen and five others in a luxury villa in Amman on Sunday morning. Four Iraqi diplomats have been prevented from returning to Iraq as Jordan hunts for the murderers.

Hikmat al-Hajou, the Iraqi deputy ambassador, was among those killed in the mansion of Sami George Thomas, an Iraqi multi-millionaire, in the wealthy suburb of Rabia in the west of the Jordanian capital in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Three of those who died had their heads cut off, say Jordanian sources quoting police investigators. The four or five murderers were both savage and patient, first gagging and tying up Mr Thomas and his girlfriend, along with two servants, and then waiting for the other guests to arrive.

Finally, all had their throats cut.

The ritualistic nature of the killings - as if designed to provoke fear - is in keeping with the traditions of the Iraqi regime. It also makes it less likely that a simple business dispute, however embittered, was involved.

The killers first secured the house with Mr Thomas and his Greek girlfriend, who is the only survivor. Iraqi observers are mystified by a police statement that she identified the murderers as speaking Arabic with an Iraqi accent, since they say she has never been to Iraq.

The first guest to arrive was Namir al-Owchi, a businessman who lived in Beirut and a friend of Mr Thomas with whom he often stayed. His family originally came from Kirkuk, northern

Iraq. He was the younger brother of Nazmi al-Owchi, a businessman of immense wealth, who is reputed to handle investments for Barzan, half-brother of Saddam Hussein and Iraqi ambassador to the UN in Geneva. Namir entered the house with a Kurd called Sadeq, another friend of Mr Thomas, said to be a barber.

The last to arrive were Hikmat al-Hajou, the Iraqi deputy ambassador, and his Egyptian-born wife Leila. He had headed the Iraqi intelligence operation at its embassy in Kuwait in the late 1980s. He is

said by Iraqi sources to have remained close to the Mukhabarat. Once all the guests had arrived, the killers cut their victims' throats.

Only hours after the murders were discovered, four Iraqi diplomats who tried to cross into their country from Jordan were turned back at the border. Given that it is three or four hours to the Karameh border crossing and Jordanian security says they were turned back "after arriving at 0600 GMT Sunday" they must have started soon after the murders.

Jordanian security also

stopped Iraqis leaving from Amman international airport.

Meanwhile Iraq is to free all Jordanian prisoners and halt legal proceedings against Jordanians in its courts. The decision, taken by President Saddam, came after he held a two-hour meeting with Jordan's prominent opposition figure, Leith Shubeilat. Jordan has given Iraq a list of 60 prisoners. The releases are an attempt to stop relations between Baghdad and Amman deteriorating further after four Jordanian students were executed in Baghdad in December.

Jordan's Prime Minister, Abdul Salam al-Majali, brushed aside suggestions late on Sunday that the attack was in revenge for the hanging of the students.

He said: "It has no link with that, at least until now, and we do not expect so. I think it's a separate incident."

Nevertheless, the killings on Sunday and earlier incidents show a growing tendency for disputes in the Middle East to lead to violence in Amman, just as regimes once used to fight proxy battles in Beirut.

— Patrick Cockburn

Saudi Arabia guilty of appalling human rights violations, MPs say

Saudi Arabia has come under heavy criticism for its poor human rights record. In a report published today it is claimed that in the kingdom "torture is endemic ... brutal and sustained".

The report, jointly published by the all-party parliamentary human rights group and the charity Redress, says that 540 peo-

ple have been executed since 1990, after trials "which are not conducted in accordance with internationally accepted judicial standards".

Also under attack is the British Foreign Office. The report argues that there is "evidence that the UK has consistently failed to protect its nationals when they

become victims of torture, and may even have acquiesced in providing the Saudi regime with the instruments it uses to commit torture". Claims made by two British nurses that they were pressurised into confessing to the murder of their colleague were "not unusual," the report says.

Ann Clwyd, chair of the parliamentary

group and one of the report's authors, said: "It is bad form to refer to public beatings, floggings and amputations in Saudi Arabia. The Foreign Secretary's mission statement, which commits us to spreading values of democracy and human rights around the world, appears not to apply in the Gulf."

One of the reasons for this may be the history of commerce between the UK and Saudi Arabia, including the al-Yamamah deal, whereby Saudi Arabia bought British arms and paid in oil. As with Indonesia, Mr Cook seems unwilling to jeopardise British jobs and money for his principles, the report says. According to Amnesty In-

ternational, which two months ago published its own report criticising the Saudi regime, 125 people suffered the death penalty last year alone, casting doubt over "many aspects of the Saudi trials system".

The Saudi embassy in London declined to comment.

— Gidon Freeman

Pregnant woman
horror
full B

Charlotte Bronte, who died in pregnancy, was a harrowing description of the vomiting that killed her. Other women have less harrowing tales to tell, but harrowing enough to suggest that serious pregnancy sickness is an affliction more serious and more widespread than you think. If you've had it, bad, says Emma Thompson, you never forget it.

Emma Thompson, who has written a book about pregnancy sickness, says it is a common problem. She says it is a "very real" problem and that it can be "very scary". She says it is a "very real" problem and that it can be "very scary". She says it is a "very real" problem and that it can be "very scary".

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Talks begin on Iraq-UN stand-off

With Iraq seemingly bent on defying the United Nations, the world watched nervously yesterday as negotiations on de-escalating the crisis began in Baghdad. But as UN negotiators hoped for a quick resolution, the odds are not high.

Pregnant mornings: horror of the full Bronte

Charlotte Bronte, who died in pregnancy, wrote harrowing descriptions of the vomiting that killed her. Other women have less harrowing tales to tell, but harrowing enough to suggest that serious pregnancy sickness is an affliction more serious and more widespread than you'd think. If you've had it bad, says Emma Houghton, you never forget it.

Even eight years after the birth of her twins, Helen Ingledew, a social worker, recalls the misery of her pregnancy as if it were yesterday. "It was simply the worst experience of my life. I'm a pretty tough person, but I wouldn't be surprised if it drove some people to jump out of the window."

Although sickness in her first pregnancy caused her to miss her honeymoon, Helen felt twice as bad during her second. "It came on almost as soon as I knew I was pregnant, and this time it was 24 hours a day - I even felt ill in the middle of the night. It was like being trapped on a ship in a force-nine gale; I couldn't keep anything down, even a sip of water. I really thought I would die."

At nine weeks of pregnancy Helen's doctor admitted her to hospital. She was dehydrated and her weight had dropped from more than eight stone to six-and-a-half.

"People would come to see me and their faces would drop because I looked so awful - I looked as if I was dying of a wasting disease. I was very negative. I remember trying to get out of a wheelchair to go to the loo and feeling absolutely desperate." At one point she broke down and asked for a termination, even though she had very much wanted the baby.

Fortunately, after a fortnight's treatment with a glucose drip and anti-sickness drugs, Helen felt well enough to leave hospital. An ultrasound scan

had revealed she was expecting twins, and despite her fears for her babies, Beth and Lily were born at 38 weeks, both healthy and weighing in at more than five pounds each.

Although Helen's case was severe, pregnancy sickness is far from unusual, afflicting more than 80 per cent of women to some degree and accounting for an estimated 8.5 million lost working days each year. Yet according to Nicky Wesson, author of *Pregnancy Sickness* (Vernillon, £6.99), it is not generally taken seriously.

"One of the main problems for women is the general lack of understanding of what they're going through. Medical staff tend to think there's nothing they can do, so tend to dismiss it. Unless you've been through it, it's difficult to appreciate how debilitating it can be."

Indeed, for some unfortunate women morning sickness used to be more than just debilitating. Until the turn of the century, hyperemesis gravidarum, or severe pregnancy sickness, was a significant cause of maternal deaths.

Charlotte Brontë, who died during her pregnancy in 1855, described her illness in letters to friends. "Let me speak the plain truth - my sufferings are very great - my nights indescribable - sickness with scarce a reprieve - I strain until what I vomit is mixed with blood." One friend, Mrs Gaskell, reported the run-up to her death: "A low wandering delirium came on; and in it she begged constantly for food and even for stimulants. She swallowed eagerly now; but it was too late."

The last recorded death from this condition was in 1939. Until relatively recently, the only treatment was therapeutic abortion, although many women were too weak to survive it; thankfully modern intravenous treatment to correct fluid and electrolyte balance is effective for the majority of the five to ten women in 1,000 who are affected.

But while treatment at the severe end of the spectrum has revolutionised its management and outcome, for women with

less life-threatening sickness there is little on offer. Since the sedative and anti-sickness drug thalidomide caused severe deformities in more than 10,000 babies in the early Sixties, pharmaceutical companies have regarded drug treatment for morning sickness as a lost cause, and doctors are now reluctant to prescribe any medication during pregnancy.

But the problem of finding an effective treatment for morning sickness is compounded by the fact that even today no one has much idea what causes it. So far studies have turned up only factors that make women more vulnerable, such as multiple pregnancy, and sickness in a previous pregnancy.

A study by a Nuneaton GP, Roger Gadsby, one of the few doctors researching this area, found that women whose mothers suffered pregnancy sickness and women prone to travel sickness were also more susceptible. While smokers seem to be less prone to sickness, there is no relation to the age of the mother or the sex of her baby.

Not that there's been any shortage of theories. Some, such as those postulating sickness as a mechanism for limiting weight gain, or to protect the mother from "toxic" substances in certain foods, have been thoroughly debunked. Others, particularly the Freudian explanation popular in the Sixties, that women suffering from

'People's faces would drop when they saw me. I looked as if I was dying of a wasting disease'

morning sickness were subconsciously rejecting their babies, linger on.

"There are still some who think there is a psychological component, but it's a load of rubbish," says Dr Gadsby. "It really is hormonal." One study, for instance, found that nearly half the women who reported feeling sick, did so even before they knew they were pregnant.

So if it's not all in the mind, what might be to blame? Preg-

nancy sickness does seem to be linked, in part, to lowered blood sugar levels, but Dr Gadsby is putting his money on it as a natural, if unfortunate, corollary of a healthy pregnancy. He is currently researching levels of blood sugar, cortisol and other anti-inflammatory substances in the blood of women in the early weeks.

"The foetus is a foreign body growing inside a woman, without an acute immunologi-

cal reaction to reject it," he explains. "Our hypothesis is that the substances which damp down the immune response are released into the maternal circulation, and an unwanted side-effect is sickness. In severe cases, more of these substances may be released into the blood, or the woman may be unusually sensitive to them."

There is plenty of evidence that sickness is a sign of a healthy pregnancy, he believes. "We found that if you start bleeding but your sickness continues, you have double the chance of continuing the pregnancy than if your sickness symptoms subside. It's a positive sign that lots of hormones are being produced."

And happily, it seems, babies are remarkably resilient to the trials and tribulations of their mothers. Research shows that even quite severe sickness and vomiting do not affect birth weight, increase the risk of abnormality or endanger the outcome of the pregnancy.

Indeed, Dr Gadsby found that women who felt sick tended to have larger placentas than average, which, since they are the baby's life support system, is a good indication of a healthy pregnancy. So even if all hell is breaking loose in your stomach, take heart from the knowledge that a few inches down it's very much business as usual.



Nightmare pregnancy: Helen Ingledew with Beth and Lily. She was so desperate that she considered a termination

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

- Small, regular snacks will maintain your blood sugar and help alleviate nausea. Indulge food cravings, but stick to foods high in starch rather than fat or sugar, which may make you feel worse.
- Rest as much as you can - tiredness compounds feelings of nausea. Get up slowly in the

- morning, preferably after something to eat.
- One study found that the elasticated bands which stimulate acupressure points in the wrist ease pregnancy nausea, as well as travel sickness.
- Eating ginger may help, by aiding digestion and reducing stimuli to the part of the brain

- controlling nausea and vomiting. Try ginger beer or biscuits, or use it fresh.
- Wesson recommends zinc supplements, quoting one study that found 42 per cent of pregnant women were eating less than the recommended daily intake of 15-19mg. "It does seem to help some women."

This business takes guts - somebody else's

We buried my Granddad in November. He was a very funny man, irreverent and careful with his money, too. When he died he wanted to be "chucked in the ground in a bin-liner without any fuss." None of this expensive respect for the autonomy of the dead. Alas, when my aunt communicated this wish to the undertaker, he said: "We couldn't possibly do that - it's unethical." So he ended up shelling out for a coffin and all the trimmings. Is there any other way?

Well yes - you can leave your body to medical dissection. As a student, the first patient I ever met was a dead one. Without any attempt at moral guidance, we were encouraged to cut it into increasingly smaller pieces. Some faintly, a few juggled with the kidneys or slipped with the intestines. One amusing man stuck a hose in one end of the gut and blasted the contents out of the other.

And then there were apocryphal stories of his smuggled out. A student was said to have stolen an arm and hidden it at the bottom of his girlfriend's



DR PHIL HAMMOND

bed. Others favoured an aberrant penis, on a key ring or dropped between tube doors or in a rugby scrum. Simon Fenn got off lightly.

Most students didn't exhibit such callous disregard for human death. The pair dissecting opposite me were scholars. They took it all very seriously and meticulously dissected out every tiny root of the autonomic nervous system running alongside the spine. It must have taken hours and was truly a beauty to behold, until

I mistook it for fat and ripped the whole lot out. It was the only time I ever saw anyone cry in the dissection room - but then I wasn't there when a student pulled back his sheet and discovered a cadaverous Auntie Beryl. Allegedly.

Dissection was generally regarded as a rite of passage thing - part of the historical dehumanisation of medicine that turns us into anti-holistic emotional cripples fit only to work a hundred hours a week in the NHS.

There was no preparation for what lay behind the dissection room door - the God-awful smell, the sound of the saw slicing off the top of the skull or the sight of unfeasibly large genitals swollen in the preservation process. It was sink or swim, survival of the fittest.

Indeed, the only reference to the grisly business came in an aside in a pathology lecture. "One man wanted to be a doctor but repeatedly failed his exams. When he died, he left us his body because it was the only way he'd ever get into medical school." It was meant as a joke, but it inadvertently reminded

us that this poor sod had never achieved his aspirations and was trying to do us a favour in death. How would he feel about our *laissez-faire* attitude to his dismembered remains? The skipping stopped soon after.

That was 1981, and medical education has moved on. Now students get introductory lectures on the ethics of cadaver use and a chance to discuss their feelings about meeting their first corpse. And the scope for abuse is far less - instead of getting a scalpel, a DVD guide book and half a body each, they get to watch someone else do it properly from a distance. Any kidney juggling is done with plastic replicas.

Some students feel they're missing out on their initiation ceremony, and some consultants agree. "We had to do it and so should they" is still a prevailing attitude in medicine.

Medical dissection started in Britain with 16th-century criminals executed for murder. This was seen as a further punishment, worse than gibbeting, and volunteers were thin on

the ground. So doctors looked under it. Raiding paupers' graves to get "resurrected corpses" was endemic in the 18th century - 2,000 snatches a year for medical schools until the Anatomy Act tried to stop it in 1832. Dissection, however, carried on apace using "unclaimed bodies".

Of the 57,000 cadavers used in London medical schools until the 1930s, virtually all were from workhouses of asylums - people who never consented to be dissected but had no-one willing or able to afford a coffin.

Nowadays, we rely on supposedly informed requests, but even when dissection is done with dignity, the ethics are questionable in the absence of evidence that it makes better doctors. The anatomical knowledge is quickly forgotten and for me at least, there was no mature reflection on death and dying.

That said, I'd be quite happy to leave my body to the nearest anatomy department and, given the chance, I'm sure Gramps would have, too. Just so long as they pay for the burial.

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VITAL SIGNS

Do we need sleep schools? Professor Peter Hill, of George's Hospital Medical School, says that, for a small child, sleep is something that has to be learned.

"It is difficult for a child to fall asleep precisely when the parents want it to. It is a skill that the child has to learn and some find it more difficult than others. So don't tell the child 'go to sleep', it doesn't work. Adults cannot sleep to order either."

Strategies that parents can use include creating a sensible, calm bedtime routine and, for early wakers, setting an alarm clock which indicates when they can come into your room.

You have heard of Type A personalities, the driven ambitious people who never let up and are prone to heart attacks. But Type D? These are the worriers, the negative and insecure people whom, a new study has shown, turn out to be more at risk of a second heart attack than their thrusting cousins.

A team from the University of Antwerp has found that among people who survived a first heart attack, Type Ds are three times more likely to suffer from a second than other personality types. It is unclear whether having the first heart attack turns assertive Type As into nervous Type Ds.

— Jeremy Lorraine, Health Editor

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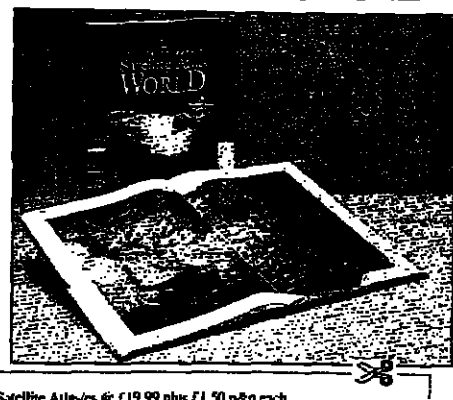
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15/FEATURES

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY 20 JANUARY 1998
15

REVELATIONS

The Time: 1968
The Place: Epsom, London
The Woman: Fay Weldon, novelist

A group of American feminists had been protesting against the Miss World beauty contest outside the Albert Hall. They even managed to break through security and throw stink bombs. Everybody in England thought they were extraordinary. I wondered what on earth they were going on about - I just couldn't understand it. The demonstration had come with such a bang that it filled the newspapers and I was invited onto a TV discussion programme. We were sat in various parts of the studio according to our views, so David Frost would have some idea what we would say. I was a working mother with a good job in advertising and I was there as an accomplished woman to show that we could succeed without all this fuss. My comment was supposed to be: "These feminists were unnecessary, neurotic and very eccentric."

I sat and listened to the others in my section claim feminists were only protesting because they were so ugly and couldn't get a man! There was no debate. It was just a plot to put these women down. I suddenly realised that I was in the wrong part of the hall, so I got up and crossed over to the area where their very, very few supporters sat. At a time when men's behaviour to women was peculiarly bad, I was just furious about how these women were being insulted.

For the first time I noticed the savagery that was automatically flung at any woman who dared to challenge the system and it took my breath away. These feminists were early martyrs to a cause and I thought if they believe it so strongly I should find out more. The effect of that physical and intellectual move was like dominoes through my life; one by one the contradictions would fall and topple the next. I had to re-look at everything. When people made casual assumptions, I would challenge. It must have been very tedious for everybody. For example: my boss would say without a blink of doubt that it was a woman's role to be decorative and that my heels ought to be higher! I would go to my tax inspector who would claim that as a woman I should only be working for pin money. When I got a promotion my colleagues would tell me it should have gone to a man with a family to support. Problems at the office got worse as I became fed up with always handling what were considered women's products: eggs, milk and food. I refused to work on cigarettes too and I was told that my duty was to my employer, then to my husband and my children but my own moral convictions were supposed to come way down the line! I ended up being fired.

I lost a lot of my girl friends too because of my opinions. I was taken to task by one over a meal: she told me no woman should ever have to support a family; they loved their husbands too much to be feminists and

anyway the idea would fail because women were too competitive with one another to unite. We fell out and she stopped talking to me. Ironically her husband left her, sold the flat without telling her and she had to support the children herself.

I took off my wedding ring, men did not wear them - women did. I could see how they were used by women as a badge of triumph and flashed about to make unmarried women feel less. My wedding ring was an affront to my sisters! What was nice in those early days was the sense of sisterhood - nobody was wondering who was right and who was wrong. I had just begun to write. My first book, *The Fat Woman's Joke*, assessed the late Sixties without me knowing that it was feminist. However, both women and men found it quite horrific. I was considered mad, bad and dangerous to know - people would actually walk out of rooms when I entered. I was a public enemy: it was not nice.

But I had finally made a connection between the personal condition of women and the political. Nowadays there is a culture

of indignation and pressure groups but back then women did not protest. The Marxist political movements of the late Sixties had made educated women feel very left out. They would make the coffee while men made the decisions. We were mute decorative witnesses - revolutionary molls. Women just did not speak in public. You had to train yourself because otherwise you felt so nervous your voice would go up two octaves and you squeaked. In the Eighties I went to Russia on a cultural mission and the British fielded quite a lot of women. The Soviet authorities with some difficulty produced a woman poet. Every time she spoke publicly her voice would rise and the Russian men would take up newspapers and determinedly read until she had stopped. It was part deliberate, part instinctive and part embarrassment. Fortunately, as a foreigner I became an honorary man, but it reminded me of how 15 years ago in England it had been exactly the same. Crossing over from one side of the television studio to the other felt like going out of the dark into the light. However the light of

ten flickered. I wrote a book called *Puffball*, about a woman at the mercy of her hormones during her pregnancy, and that went down very badly with feminists. At the time it was felt that women were exactly like men - their hormonal existence had previously been used to keep them in their place, and became something to be ignored. Two years later everything had switched again and moved into mother goddess and menstrual joy.

The first time you say something people look at you astonished, the second time it seems vaguely familiar and is taken se-

riously, eventually everybody agrees and forgets there was ever any disagreement.

Being ahead is always painful and difficult; you have to get through that first time and the blank looks. The revolution once accomplished becomes part of the establishment. Give it 20 years and the truth becomes the lie. By the end of Eighties the truths of early feminism had become what you had to fight against. All the worst bits had been taken up and turned sour. I re-read all my early books and decided which of the statements I had made were no longer relevant - most of them were broad

generalisations about the terrible behaviour of men. I was speaking in Boston to a mostly female audience and explained what I had done, but whenever I read out any of these statements everybody rose to their feet and cheered wildly. It was too late to pull it back.

Six months ago a man from the Institute of Cultural Relations came to see me. He was writing a book about the difficulty men were having getting their voices heard in a media which, at all levels except the very top, is totally female dominated. The polarities have switched. He was very passionate about the plight of fathers and the way that women have their babies aborted with no reference to them. I laughed slightly at the idea of oppression of men and I told him if he felt like that he should start a masculinist movement and he replied: "Men will never unite - they are too competitive for the favours of women!" It was a revelation, exactly the same sentiments as 30 years previously and it has made me start looking around. He came with me to the hairdressers, to the heart of feminine, rather than feminist, power - it was rather ironic in its way. He talked as I had a wash and a cut. My hairdresser thought he was a wimp; the typical reaction to a depressed man who appears to be complaining. Once again, it was the same response as you would have had from a man to a woman back in 1968.

I'm not blaming feminism, but the rights of men now have to be addressed, and the role of employment too, because what are we going to do with the children? We can't go on like this! Nowadays it is women who often disapprove of me. I've been described as the Winnie Mandela of feminism - so what's new?

Where do I get the courage? I just know I'm right and they are wrong! They will come round to my way of thinking very fast. I just don't care what people think. I recovered from a fear of flying by deciding that death was probably preferable to life anyway! What have you got to lose? Today we are handicapped by "emotional correctness", telling us how we should feel about everything. It matches the "political correctness" trying to control how we think and speak.

It is impossible to arrive at a society in which you shouldn't be questioning everything. I've learnt that not only should you change your mind, but that if you don't you really will be mad, bad and dangerous to know. The pace of change is hotting up so the time you have to be right is getting shorter and shorter.

'Big Women' is published by Flamingo at £12.99.

Interview by Andrew G Marshall

'We were sisters. We didn't wonder who was right and who was wrong'



Fay Weldon: 'The truths of early feminism had become what you had to fight against'

Photograph: Rui Xavier

Is not fair that moral brigade portrays me as slut. Bill still insists nothing took place

Saturday 17th January
Column inches: 450 (v.g. particularly since 235 in so-called heavyweight papers). Units of alcohol: 7 (celebratory champagne with lawyer). TV chat show appearances: 10 (also v.g. considering blanket ban on media interviews).

Weight of evidence against President: increasing (yesss!!).

Hmmm. Am v. worried about being portrayed in press as non-saltily sort of person, in manner of Divine Brown etc. Cannot understand why President so unwilling to drop his trousers. Has never seemed to be problem for him in the past. Is presumably scared that he will not be able to make it stand up before a jury (hmmmm. Wonder if can pass. also sue him for contravening UN weapons inspection guidelines??) Gaaah! Is 10.05am already. Am going to be late for testimonial hearing. Was supposed to be meeting the Prezzy and Sue Carpenter McMizza - my solicitor - in court 15 minutes ago. Had better start putting makeup on.

1pm Finish putting makeup on. Am not looking forward to meeting Prezzy again face-to-face (although admittedly preferable to face-to-pelvis). Hope that new image makes self look sultry in manner of wronged woman, not desperate and gold-digging in manner of trashy tart.

Grrr. Bloody White House Puppy also there at hearing. Spent entire six hours lying under table drooling and trying to shove its nose in my crotch (is true then what they say about dog owners being like their dogs). Prezzy now claims he has "no memory of night in question". Who does he think he is - Ronnie Reagan?

Sunday 18th January
Movies offered: 5 (poor. Particularly do not want to be in film called 'Paula Jones and the Hotel Room of Doom', even if Harrison Ford is playing the President). Weight of speculation about case: growing (still! Excellent.).



PAULA JONES'S DIARY

Cigarettes: 40 (v. bad and unhealthy; but have to have something in mouth to calm nerves. Although would not obviously say that in court because might prejudice jury against me).

9am. Aaargh. Am busy preparing for Letterman show when prosecuting lawyer phones in buff & asks if I am aware of what a gagging order actually involves.

Explain that yes - is what I was given when Bill dropped his trousers that night in Little Rock. Har de har har.

Ohmigawd. More revelations in paper about President's sexual past. Woman in White House now accusing him of having once "fondled her in sexual manner". Was obviously not Hillary (top legal giantess type person), which would have been v.v. shocking and scandalous, but still good news for my case. Apparently Prezzy groped female aide near the Oval Office. Or may be "orifices" (was in *Guardian* newspaper so poss. misprint).

No further developments on legal

front. Grrr. Why is Bill so reluctant to meet me in open courtroom for fair trial? Is just typical of a man - worried about merest prospect of being "committed". Huh. Am only asking for apology (and \$2m). Is not as though I expect him to go down on his knees and grovel in front of me (which is bloody generous if you ask me, since that is precisely what he expected me to do).

Monday 19th January
Pounds gained (none - still no out-of-court settlement. Ya boo sucks etc.) Lottery tickets: 14 (but will doffo give them up if win \$2m in out-of-court settlement).

Yawn. More bloody interviews. Excitement of having flourishing media career now starting to wear off a bit - am fed up with explaining case over and over again. Lawyer says I should keep my head down for a while (huh! Some advice. Is doing that which got me into all this trouble in first place). Also is bloody well not fair that I am being portrayed by Smug Moral Brigade to be some kind of slut. Was not as though President & I had actual Act of Congress or anything.

Vile Bill still insisting that nothing took place between us (assume this is what is meant by "State Of Union" address). Says it would have been different matter had I been top Sinn Fein spokesperson type person, in which case he would definitely have made advances and tried to initiate special relationship). Huh. (Am also in bad mood because gwt. are trying to make entire country give up cigarettes.)

12 midnight Argorisblurrygonfun... Just got back from celebratory meal with legal team. Crash out in front of TV (yikes! Is repeat of my Larry King interview). Wonder if am putting on weight, or whether bum just looks big in strange camera angle. Hmmm. Must consult Diet Chart tomorrow to check how many calories there are in an average sized Presidential penis. ...

— Debbie Barham

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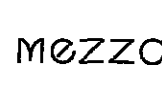
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How Washington's Irish lobby was brought to book



**DONALD
MACINTYRE**
THE WHITE HOUSE
AND SINN FEIN

Diplomats as urbane as Raymond Seitz – and Seitz, the US Ambassador to London from 1991 to 1994 is a man for whom the word urbane could have been invented – don't usually plunge themselves pell-mell into big-time controversy. In particular they are masters of timing. By instinct and training they are hyper-sensitive to the dangers of saying even the right thing at the wrong time. So the disclosure in his memoirs – at the very moment when Northern Ireland peace talks have reached one of their most critical stages yet – of how deeply susceptible to republican influences the White House was in its first two years – will provoke a lot of criticism and some anger. It isn't all that surprising that Downing Street, where officials are still sifting through the collateral damage of the famous Gordon Brown biography, has been saying wistfully that it would be nice if people stopped writing books. Quite a lot of people will believe Seitz has said the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Several items will appear on the charge sheet. It will no doubt be said that as a George Bush appointee who was removed from office by Bill Clinton (albeit after two years of service to the Democrats) he is nursing a grievance. That he still resents being overruled by Bill Clinton's decision to grant Gerry Adams his first US visa in early 1994. That the same Clinton decision doesn't seem so inappropriate now that – as from yesterday – Tony Blair has twice received Adams at Downing Street, handshakes and all. That he is bitter about his long-standing differences with his Dublin counterpart, Jean Kennedy Smith – who, unlike him, is still in office after four full years. That this claim will unhelpfully fuel the paranoia of those Unionists who believe that a pan-nationalist conspiracy driven by Washington and Dublin is hell-bent on a united Ireland. And finally that from the White House perspective – the worst of all possible accusations, this, to make about a diplomat – he went woefully native during his tour as Ambassador, and worst of all went native in the period of a Conservative administration.

Maybe. But Seitz had a great deal to be aggrieved about. He is resolutely refusing to add anything to his most sensational suggestion, that the Clinton White House may have passed British intelligence to the IRA. But anything was possible in those first two years. The decision, months before the first ceasefire and against the fervent pleading of London (and the clear view of not only Seitz but Warren Christopher, then Secretary of State) to give Adams a visa was a crass error, sacrificing trust between London and Washington by treating Northern Ireland as a sideshow of Irish American politics. As Seitz points out, even Arafat, with a rather larger represen-

tative claim than Adams, had been forced to renounce violence, as Adams wasn't.

Moreover, the susceptibility of Mrs Smith and the National Security Staffer Nancy Soderberg – at least at that time – to republican sweet talk is not in doubt. Seitz doesn't mention this – but at least one Unionist politician who visited Ms Soderberg's office claimed the walls were festooned with crude republican propaganda. And Mrs Smith, almost certainly appointed as a sop to Ted Kennedy, was among the most vociferous champions of the visa – a "quid" for which, Seitz says, there was at the time no "quo". It's odd, for two reasons, that Mrs Smith is still safely ensconced in Dublin. One is that the paper jointly agreed by London and Dublin – much of which has been welcomed by the Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble – suggests that the Fianna Fail government has been re-thinking elements of its own traditional version of nationalism. But the second reason is the rapid and impressive learning curve Washington has undergone since the dark days described by Seitz, and which is epitomised by its present relative openness to Unionist opinion and by the chairmanship of the Belfast talks by the widely respected honest broker Senator George Mitchell. The shift in Washington's attitude also acquits Seitz of the charge of unseemly haste (the officials who resigned from the State Department over the other foreign policy disaster area of the time, the Balkans, were turning out newspaper columns and books within days). Some will use hindsight to say that the media and political aggrandisement of Adams – not to mention the boost to fundraising – on that first US trip was followed by the ceasefire. You might just as well say it was followed by the Canary Wharf bomb, the fatal shooting of two policemen in Lurgan and a great deal of other suffering and mayhem in between. So this is history, but important history none the less.

But there is more to it than that. Seitz has provided a timely reminder of how even intelligent, politically experienced democrats (with a small d as well as a big one) fall for romantic notions about the validity of terrorist violence in Northern Ireland. For too long too many people in the United States – and some in Congress still – bought into the notion fostered by Sinn Fein leaders – and once disastrously by Margaret Thatcher when she indefensibly compared the ANC to the IRA – that they belong to the ranks of freedom struggles by majority populations against totalitarian regimes. At present the IRA ceasefire is holding despite the extreme fragility of the peace. The shooting of Catholics by loyalist gunmen since the New Year, as well as the INLA shooting of the LVF's Billy Wright and a prominent UDA man yesterday, is a reminder, if one was needed, of just how fragile it is.

Mr Blair was entirely right to meet Sinn Fein yesterday to hear their complaints about the document agreed between London and Dublin. He emphasised yet again that it was a discussion document and not a fixed blueprint. But the big test is yet to come – whether the republicans will accept a settlement which doesn't promise a united Ireland. Although Sinn Fein has not yet even accepted a Northern Ireland assembly, the *sine qua non* of the deal, there is a prize consummately worth going for in Belfast. Even if Sinn Fein cannot actually endorse a settlement that stops well short of its historic aspirations, the hope must be that it will agree to have it put to a referendum on both sides of the border, and then seek to advance on it by solely democratic means. But until that happens, it helps no one to foster illusions about what these people have been in the all too recent past.

She was much more than a wronged woman: she was a verbal acrobat



**RUTH
PADEL**
THE POETRY OF
SYLVIA PLATH

Stuff the woman thing: the first thing about Sylvia Plath is that she's a brilliant, important poet, an American who stung her way into British poetry like Pacific Rim cuisine coasting into Kilburn, bringing with her a whole arsenal of fresh tastes and skills. Her work is energetic and surprising today, still a crucial influence on poets learning their trade. Not just women. Most outstanding male British poets today would be totally different without Plath.

Her professional gifts, which she spent her short life developing, depended on an exhausting tension between active and passive. Her imagination burnt with active desire to shape language newly and fuse the way-out metaphor with utterly direct speech. But she was also passive, in being absolutely open to the world.

You can see all this at work in a famous poem, "The Moon and the Yew Tree" which makes moon and tree symbols of the human condition, caught between the inky shade of Gothic trees and a "light of the mind, cold and planetary"; an "O-gape of complete despair". Between her thoughts on the "bald wild" moon and that bossy tree, Plath inserts flat statements of personal despair ("I simply cannot see where there is to get to.") But her genius gallops them off into some vanishing point where the personal becomes universal:

The moon is no door. It is a face in its own right.

White as a knuckle and terribly upset ...

And the message of the yew tree is blackness – blackness and silence.

The poem says we all live somewhere between that blackness and that light: a universal statement, but not one she sees herself making. "That tree", she said on radio, "with astounding egotism, managed and ordered the whole affair". She let the world work on her: brilliantly.

In poetry, a precarious oscillation between active and passive is fine; in life, maybe not such a good thing. Plath was a rising poet who hit England in the late Fifties and married another rising poet, Ted Hughes, now Poet Laureate who, after



Poets in love: Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath in 1956, the year they were married

Photograph: New York Times

35 years of silence, is now publishing his love poems about her. They lived and wrote together in America and England. Yes, there were scenes; yes, there was another and very beautiful woman; and by February 1963 Plath had killed herself.

In a young woman at a period when feminism had not yet suggested ways of being active in a man-made world, that active-passive tension which fired her creativity was also, I think, her source of tragedy. Yet it was the passivity that snaked its way into her myth. "Isn't her poetry full of self-pitying anguish?" asked a male friend crossly. "Isn't that why feminists of the time liked it? Nowadays – well, you won't catch the Spice Girls reading stuff like that. No self-pity for them."

Well now. Yes, being married to a powerful man did bring up poems about her father and the power he had over her. Here is the heart of the Plath myth, and of that extraordinarily possessive anger about her hissing among some feminist chariot-wheels. Plus the hurt-by-men poems got extra reader appeal from aligning Dad with the Nazis:

I have always been scared of you

With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo ...

Not God but a swastika

So black no sky could squeak through.

Every woman adores a Fascist,

The boot in the face, the brute

Brute heart of a brute like you.

But her rage and hurt poems got a posthumous identity-with-the-victim response that did no service to her poetry – or to feminism; and ignored the fact that they were not all directed at men. Four days after "Daddy" she wrote an equally frightening poem about her mother:

Who do you think you are?

A Communion wafer?

Blubbery Mary?

I shall take no bite of your body ...

Off, off, off, eel tentacle.

There is nothing between us.

She was deeply competitive with other women (as her culture predisposed her to be), both in the attractiveness stakes and in poetry itself. She was of her time. There's little room in her existing body of work for generosity about other people's pain.

In blaming Hughes for Plath's anguish, a naive form of spot-the-victim feminism confused psychological trauma (which can strike anyone, any time) with patriarchy as the cause of all Plath's ills – as expressed in her poems.

Plath's psychological hurt, and the use she put it in to poetry, long pre-dated Hughes. What was important was how she used what happened to her – and what she made happen. Robert Graves said it was death to be a poet and death to live with one; poets are often up-

setting people to know, and Plath was no exception.

Besides, feminism has moved on from pointing out 'passive wounds'. For women born the year Plath died (1963), "victim feminism" is one big yawn. Maybe they will read Plath for her "fuck you" approach, rather than pain. (Lines from the pop group Alisha's Attic such as "Sometimes I'd like to bite his head off – yeah, that'd be nice", could be a direct hit from Plath.) But I'd rather they read her for the radiant creativity itself, which ranges over everything, not just pain. Such as tenderness ("Your clear eye is the one absolutely beautiful thing"). Such as a voracious interest in everything you can slam into a poem, from bee-keeping to de Chirico. Like her absolute elation about the world: a pure, very American, metaphysical joy in physical things:

Nobody in the lane and nothing, nothing but blackberries.

Blackberries on either side,

though on the right mainly,

A blackberry alley, going

down in hooks, and a sea

Somewhere at the end of it,

heaving ...

The high green meadows are

glowing, as if lit from within.

I come to one bush of berries

so ripe it is a bush of flies ...

It belittles her poetry to say men hurt her into it. Plath was a verbal and tonal acrobat, taking risks in poetry just as she did with her psyche. What Plath cared about first, as the diaries and letters make Niagara-clear, was poetry. This was what she based her marriage and life on. She would not thank you for digging up from round her grave the daffodils from her Devon garden planted by her husband. Both, in their way, were nature poets who saw no distinction between nature outside and inside human beings. I do not believe she would have given up one iota of her own nature, agonised as it was, if it had meant writing lesser poems. I wish she'd known how famous she'd become. But she would have hated to be famous for anything other than her art: especially an icon of female suffering at male hands.

Does Frank Dobson need to have his head examined?



**ANDREAS
WHITTAM
SMITH**
CARE IN THE
COMMUNITY

Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, has done two brave things. The first is admirable. He has admitted that moving mentally ill people out of hospitals and into "care in the community" has gone too far. It will have to be partly reversed. Now it takes a lot for a minister to set limits to a policy which originally had the support of the medical establishment and which is relatively cheap to carry out.

Yet in the same way that

asylums, renamed mental hospitals, became discredited, so has the wholesale discharge of paranoid schizophrenics from psychiatric wards in hospitals become intolerable. The unexpected consequence has been that during the past five years, the Government has had to conduct inquiries into 40 cases of killings committed by mentally ill people at large in the community. Dispensing with beds for psychiatric patients – down from 150,000 in 1960 to 37,000 today – has undoubtedly saved a great deal of money. However, the new Secretary of State for Health accepts that the cost of the existing system is too great in non-financial terms, involving as it sometimes does "serious or death of some total injury or death as well as diminishing the quality of life of neighbours of those with serious mental problems."

Hence Mr Dobson's second, brave act. Without having already secured the necessary funds, he has announced his desire – "plan" is too strong a word – to create new forms of residential care for mental patients. He did not envisage asylums, which were like

"clapped-out old motor coaches", but instead "custom-built vehicles for patients". As to the cost, Mr Dobson remarked that when the scale of the problem is known, "we will need to think of where the money would come from". He didn't believe that the amount required would be so low that "you can do it with a whip-round".

In fact, having altered the terms of the debate, Mr Dobson does not appear to have left himself with much room for manoeuvre. Until now, whenever a schizophrenic has committed a mindless crime, the blame has been dispersed. It has been placed partly on individuals: hospital staff for premature release, social workers for not paying sufficient attention to warning signs, the police for not acting swiftly enough. Or there has been criticism of insufficient co-ordination between the agencies involved. Or the focus has been on the shortages of resources from which the National Health Service as a whole suffers. But unless the minister acts quickly, he is going to find his courageous remarks quoted back at him whenever there is a horrific incident. This killing

would not have happened, it will be said, had the Government provided the extra 24-hour residential care that it promised. Rather than many scapegoats, there would be only one – the Secretary of State himself.

Mr Dobson is far too shrewd to be caught in this trap. Either he has already earmarked some of the extra funds that the Treasury has agreed to make available to the NHS, or he is relying upon cost-cutting elsewhere. But however it comes out, he is now committed to a gutsy decision – to spend more on, say, schizophrenia and depression and less than would otherwise be the case on, say, hip operations, or heart disease.

Beyond this, in deciding how best to improve the care and treatment of the mentally disturbed, the minister can either simply add psychiatric beds and leave it at that or he can ask himself a fundamental question. Given psychiatry's history of defeated hopes, what is the best way forward? The use of new, antipsychotic drugs developed since the 1950s was supposed to alleviate symptoms, provide sufferers with an alternative to institutionalisa-

tion and gain for them the benefits of living a more normal life – if only they had worked.

Likewise the Victorian asylums were built with the best intentions. In his book, published in 1837, *What Asylums Were, Are and Ought to Be*, William Browne wrote that "the whole secret of the new system ... may be summed up in two words, kindness and occupation". But such therapeutic institutions, which would indeed have helped people with major mental illnesses, were quickly overwhelmed by sheer numbers. From holding 100 or so inmates at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, the average asylum contained over 1,000 by the time the First World War began. They became in effect a network of prison camps for the mentally disturbed – a Gulag – with doctors in white coats, nurses in regulation caps and patients in coarse, ill-fitting suits. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, hideous operations on the brain, lobotomies, were performed, which tranquillised patients while injuring such judgement and social skills as they had – a shameful episode. Policy goes wrong because

the intellectual foundations of psychiatry are weak. The relationship between mind and brain is no clearer today than it was to the ancient Greek philosophers. Scientists are unable to detect any biological signs of mental illnesses except in the case of dementias such as Alzheimer's disease. So far as diagnosis goes, mental illness is not like cancer, which either you have got, or you haven't. Mental illness lies on a continuum with normality. At what point does a child's short attention span become an attention deficit disorder? Schizophrenia has a multitude of different symptoms.

I am not for one minute suggesting that Mr Dobson should involve himself in these knotty problems. But they should serve as a warning. It is a wonderful thing that more resources will be devoted to mental health. Yet it is a field in which promising developments often bring, in the fullness of time, perverse results. Having made a brave change of direction, Mr Dobson now needs to adopt a cautious, questioning stance to those who will advise him how best to proceed.

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18/OBITUARIES

Carl Perkins

Carl Lee Perkins, singer, guitarist, songwriter: born Ridgely, Tennessee 9 April 1932; married 1953 Valda Crider (two sons); died Nashville, Tennessee 19 January 1998.

In 1955 Carl Perkins was playing country music at a dance in Jackson, Tennessee and "Right in front of me, this boy stopped dancing and told a beautiful girl, 'Ah, don't step on my suede shoes'." As soon as he finished playing, Perkins scribbled the lyrics to "Blue Suede Shoes" on a paper bag. A rock'n'roll classic had been born and the song gave Carl Perkins a long career, although he wrote many other witty, gritty songs of Tennessee life.

It certainly wasn't one for the money with Perkins. He was born into a poor sharecropping family near Tiptonville, Tennessee in 1932. When his father contracted tuberculosis, the family went on welfare and Carl and his brothers were picking cotton as soon as they were able. Despite the poverty, he had found memories and poured his emotion into "Daddy Sang Bass", a US country hit for Johnny Cash.

The Perkins family had been one of the few white families on the plantation. He heard the blues being played around him and developed a love for the country music which he heard on the radio. He made a two-string guitar from a cigar box and graduated to a second-hand one, which cost \$3.

When in the early 1950s the family moved to Jackson, Tennessee, Carl (lead guitar) formed a band with his brothers, Jay (rhythm guitar) and Clayton (upright bass), and the drummer W.S. Holland. Carl had a day job in a bakery but he was laid off shortly after his wedding to Valda Crider in January 1953.

In 1954 Perkins heard Elvis Presley's first record for Sun Records in Memphis and realised that his rocking version of a country song, "Blue Moon of Kentucky", was exactly what he was attempting to do. He and the band headed for Memphis and were signed by Sun's own-

er and producer, Sam Phillips. Perkins' first single, the country heartbreaker, "Turn Around", was released in February 1955, followed by the rockabilly "Gone, Gone, Gone" in August. As he later modestly sang, "Rockabilly music, ain't nothing to it, it's just a hopped-up country song."

In the autumn of 1955 Sam Phillips sold Elvis's contract to RCA, as he believed he had a similar talent in Carl Perkins. In December 1955, Sun released "Blue Suede Shoes" and aimed it at the new teenage rock'n'roll market. Perkins saw it differently: "Blue Suede Shoes is the most country song that's been written. There never was a man appreciated a pair of shoes like an old country boy, and them city boys don't drink liquor out of a fruit jar."

"Blue Suede Shoes" entered the Top 40 the same week as Elvis's first RCA record, "Heartbreak Hotel". Initially, it was climbing faster than Elvis's single, prompting RCA's Steve Sholes to ask Sam Phillips, "Did we sign the wrong man?" In the end, "Blue Suede Shoes" went to No 2 while "Heartbreak Hotel" was top, but the single also topped the US country charts.

In March 1956, Perkins and his band were driving from Memphis to New York for *The Perry Como Show*. Overcome by tiredness, their manager and driver fell asleep at the wheel and the car catapulted into a truck.

He was killed and all three Perkins brothers were injured, Carl being in a coma for three days and in a cast for two months. Elvis recorded "Blue Suede Shoes" for an album, but in the UK it was released as a single in competition with Perkins's own. Both made the Top 10 with Elvis slightly higher at No 9. Some commentators contend that Perkins' career lost momentum because of his injuries (true) and that he could have rivalled Elvis Presley (false).

Perkins knew he was no match for the King. "Presley meant more to the kids than a guy singing a song. He was a sex image, a good-looking cat who didn't really have to sing at all when he walked out on the stage. We were so fortunate that we had a guy like him to open the door."

Perkins' Sun records are vignettes of Southern life. The dance hall fight "Let's Get Dixin' Fried", reflects his experiences - "He picked up a razor and he wasn't shavin'". He wrote "Boppin' the Blues", "Put Your Cat Clothes On" and "Glad All Over", which he sang in the film *Disc Jockey Janboree* (1957). He rekindled "Matchbox", a blues song by Blind Lemon Jefferson, with Jerry Lee Lewis on piano. Ricky Nelson admitted, "I wanted to be Carl Perkins".

On 4 December 1956, Perkins was recording when Elvis Presley looked in. An impromptu session between Perkins, Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis and possibly Johnny Cash took place: a more talented and yet dysfunctional quartet is hard to imagine.

In 1958, he and Cash moved to Columbia Records, but Perkins' attempts to recapture "Blue Suede Shoes" with "Pink Pedal Pushers" and "Pointed Toe Shoes" were ill-advised. Far better is the underrated "Jive After Five". In the same year Perkins was devastated when his brother Jay died of a brain tumour. This caused him to drink but as he admitted, "I used to think that if I had a drink, I could play the guitar a whole lot better". His recordings for Sun, Columbia and then Decca have been collected in the five-CD set *The Classic Carl Perkins* (1990), which also features alternate takes.

His songs were recorded by the British beat groups of the 1960s, not least the Beatles. On Merseyside, Kingsize Taylor and George Harrison impressed each other by copying Perkins' guitar licks, while the Beatles recorded "Matchbox", "Honey Don't" and "Everybody's Trying to Be My Baby". The recent *Anthology and Live at the BBC* show that the Beatles also taped "Sure to Fall", "Glad All Over" and "Lend Me Your Comb". John Lennon sang "Blue Suede Shoes" in concert and Paul McCartney invited Carl to join him for "Get It" (1982). The rumour of a 1964 session featuring Carl Perkins and the Beatles appears to be unfounded.

In 1965 Johnny Cash suggested that Carl Perkins join his band so that they could wear each other off booze and drugs. Perkins, free of running a group, stayed with Cash for ten years, appearing on live albums from Folsom Prison and San Quentin Prison. He wrote, without credit, the tune for "A Boy Named Sue".



Perkins: 'Rockabilly music, ain't nothing to it, it's just a hopped-up country song'

In 1970 Perkins made an album, *Boppin' the Blues*, with the contemporary band NRBQ, and in 1974 cut *My Kind of Country*, his best country album. That same year his hard-drinking brother, Clayton, shot himself. Carl had earlier had a shotgun accident: he shot himself in the

foot which prevented him from dancing around on stage.

In 1976 he went on the road with his sons, Stan and Greg, and he worked with them until his death. He made an album of rock'n'roll standards, *Ol' Blue Suede's Back* (1978), with the Jordanaires and Elvis's producer, Felton Jarvis. Much to his surprise, it made the UK album charts and he toured the UK with Bo Diddley.

Carl Perkins achieved peace of mind by becoming a born-again Christian, and he wrote a memoir, *Disciple in Blue Suede Shoes* (1978). He wrote many

songs about Elvis ("The EP Express", "Elvis We Love You") and about his place in the pantheon of rock'n'roll ("The Birth of Rock and Roll", "Born to Rock", "The Godfather of Rock and Roll"). He recorded with Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis as *The Survivors* (1982) and they added Roy Orbison for a studio album at Sun, *The Class of '55* (1985).

A highly acclaimed Channel 4 programme, *Carl Perkins and Friends: a rockabilly special*, was broadcast in 1985. The friends included Eric Clapton, George Harrison, Ringo Starr and Dave

Edmunds. In 1987 Perkins was elected to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Country artists were recording his songs - the Judds and Dolly Parton had success with "Let Me Tell You About Love" and "Silver and Gold" respectively. Best of all, the Nashville fiddle player Mark O'Connor recorded a stunning "Restless" in 1990 with Vince Gill, Ricky Skaggs and Steve Wariner.

In 1991 Carl Perkins developed throat cancer but he was soon back on the road. In 1992 he released two CDs, *Friends, Family and Legends*, and 706 Re-

union with Elvis Presley's guitarist Scotty Moore.

In 1996 he released *Go Cat Go!*, also the title of his autobiography. The album featured guest appearances from John Fogerty, Willie Nelson, Bono, Tom Petty, Paul McCartney and George Harrison. The high spot was "Rockabilly Music" with Paul Simon, which refers to his battle with cancer and to his long-standing marriage. "Heaven's in your arms, We're in the arms of the Lord." Three strokes then left him partially paralysed.

- Spencer Leigh

Martin Bayer

Martin Harold Bayer, solicitor: born Kimberley, South Africa 24 January 1931; senior partner, Birkbeck Montagu 1977-85; senior partner, Bayer Rosin 1985-95; consultant, Mishcon de Reya 1995-97; died Montfort, France 27 December 1997.

In the early 1960s, whilst a young lawyer, Martin Bayer was approached by Canon John Collins to assist in organising a network to support political prisoners and their families in South Africa. The Defence & Aid Fund for Southern Africa, based in London, raised and

smuggled millions of pounds into the country, primarily to fund legal representation of political prisoners and to provide economic support for their families. Bayer - known as "Mr X" - was particularly proud of the fact that the organisation was never infiltrated by the South African security services. For this work and for his lifelong campaign against apartheid, President Nelson Mandela honoured Martin Bayer as a "Veteran of the Struggle".

Bayer was born in Kimberley, South Africa, in 1931 into a liberal Jewish family. His father was a country doctor and

the family lived in Barclay West, a small town in a diamond-mining area, on the banks of the River Vaal. Martin was educated at the Roman Catholic Christian Brothers' College in Kimberley and Cape Town and then at the University of Cape Town, where he read Law.

It was whilst he was at university that his political consciousness and innate sense of fairness influenced him to take an active stand against the injustice of the established political order in South Africa. He despised the colour bar and the associated racism that was fostered by the political status quo.

He became involved in student politics, was elected a member of the university's Student Representative Council, and he represented the University of Cape Town on the Council of the National Union of South African Students. He also became involved as an activist in the anti-apartheid movement. After graduating, he won a scholarship to Queens' College, Cambridge, to read for a further degree in Law.

Bayer returned to South Africa in 1954, where he became a lecturer in the Faculty of Law at the University of the Witwatersrand. South Africa was becoming more and more

polarised and the apartheid government was becoming more repressive. This culminated in the mass arrest of political activists, which led to the Rivonia trials at which Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and others were convicted.

It was in this atmosphere that Martin Bayer decided to emigrate to England. He took articles with the London law firm of Birkbeck, Julius, Coburn & Broad and was admitted as a solicitor in England and Wales. Notwithstanding his lifelong love of South Africa, Bayer, in his usual style, became totally engaged in the life and culture of his adopted country. He be-

came partner in the firm - later merged as Birkbeck Montagu - and from 1977 to 1985 acted as its senior partner. He left to become senior partner of Bayer Rosin and, on its merging with Mishcon de Reya in 1995, a consultant to that firm, a position he held until his death.

Bayer was a gifted lawyer whose work encompassed the full range of legal disciplines, from private clients to complex City-based takeovers and mergers. One of his talents was an ability to relate to everyone with whom he had contact. He was a great listener and raconteur, and left one feeling that he had

given his undivided attention. Outside work, his interests included politics, literature, music, theatre, film and fine art. He collected art with an intuitive eye and was for 30 years a director of the Bond Street gallery the Fine Art Society.

In the late 1980s, he bought a house in the village of Montfort in south-west France. He learnt French, fell in love with the food, the countryside and the people. After his death, the villagers of Montfort held a memorial service for him and almost every villager came to pay respects to him.

- Kevin Gold



Bayer: 'Veteran of the Struggle'

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2802 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2801) or faxed to 0171-293 2800, and are charged at £3.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, functions, forthcoming marriages, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line (VAT extra). They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

The Independent's main switchboard number is 0171-293 2800.

Appointments

Mr Tony Millson, to be British High Commissioner to the Republic of Gambia.

Lord Nicholls of Birkenhead and Lord Hoffmann, to be non-permanent Judges of the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal.

Mr Chris Orr, to be Professor and Course Director of Printmaking at the Royal College of Art.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

Princess Margaret, Honorary President, the British Museum Development Trust, attends a meeting of the Council at the British Museum, London WC1.

Changing of the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

Birthdays

Dr Edwin (Buzz) Aldrin, astronaut, 68; Mr Tom Baker, actor, 62; Sir John Chadwick, High Court judge, 57; Air Marshal Sir David Cousins, Air Member for Personnel, 55; Mr Derek Dougan, football player and writer, 60; The Very Rev David Edwards, Provost Emeritus of Southwark Cathedral, 69; Lord Ewing of Kirkcaldy, former MP, 67; The Hon Sir Henry Fisher, former President, Wolfson College, Oxford, 80; Miss Lisa Goldard, actress, 46; Lord Hanson, industrialist, 76; Miss Barbara Hay, ambassador to Uzbekistan, 44; Major Dick Hearn, racehorse trainer, 77; Mr Frank Johnson, editor, the *Spectator*, 55; Commandant Vonla McBride, former director, WRNS, 77; Mr Christopher Martin-Jenkins, radio sports commentator, 53; Miss Patricia Neal, actress, 72; Dr Jessica Rawson, Warden, Merton College, Oxford, 55; Mr Nathan Shcharansky, Soviet dissident, 50; Mr Eric Stewart, rock guitarist, 53; Mr Curtis Strange, golfer, 43; Professor Nalin Chandra Wickramasinghe, astronomer, 59; Mr Nigel Williams, novelist, 50; Mr John Withrow, editor, the *Sunday Times*, 46.

Anniversaries

Births: André-Marie Ampère, physicist, 1775; Hudie Ledbetter ("Leadbelly"), blues artist, 1889; George Burns (Nathan Birnbaum), comedian, writer and producer, 1896; Joy Friederike Victoria (Gessner) Adamson, writer, 1910; Federico Fellini, Director, 1920. Deaths: Sir John Soane, architect, 1873; Richard Doddridge Blackmore, novelist, 1900; John Ruskin, social reformer, art critic and writer, 1900; (Peter John) Johnny Weissmuller, actor and swimmer, 1984; Audrey Hepburn (Edna van Heemstra Hepburn-

Ruston), actress, 1933; Sir Matt (Matthew) Busby, football manager, 1934. On this day the First Fleet sailed to Botany Bay arrived in New South Wales, 1788; Hong Kong was ceded to Britain by China, 1841; the first game of basketball was played at Springfield, Massachusetts, 1892; Sir Vivian Fuchs, leading the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition, arrived at the South Pole, 1958; John Fitzgerald Kennedy was inaugurated as the 35th US president, 1961. Today is the Feast Day of St Euthymius the Great, St Fabian, pope, St Fechin and St Sebastian.

Lectures

National Gallery: Colin Wiggins, "New Appearances (iii); Zurbarán, *Cup of Water and Rose on a Silver Plate*", 1pm.

Victoria and Albert Museums: Jan Ross-Munro, "Thomas Chippendale and 18th-century Furniture", 2.30pm.

Tate Gallery: Karen Hearn, "Secrets and Lies in 16th-century Painting", 1pm.

British Museum: Gordon Barras, "Chinese Calligraphy after 1949", 1.15pm.

National Portrait Gallery: Rosemary Kelly, "The Trial and Execution of King Charles I", 1.10pm.

Gresham College: Bernard's Inn Hall, London EC2: Professor Ian Stewart, "The Geometry of Evolution", 1pm.

Luncheons

Newspaper Society

Mr Chris Oakley, Managing Director, Mirror Regional Newspapers, and President of the Newspaper Society, hosted a lunch yesterday at the Newspaper Society, London WC1, in honour of Mr Gordon Brown MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

LAW REPORT: 20 JANUARY 1998

A 'houseboat' does not have to be boat-shaped

Although a "residential houseboat" did not have to be boat-shaped, a decision that a craft consisting of a floating platform with a two-storey prefabricated building on it was not a houseboat was not wrong in law.

Sussex Investments Ltd v Secretary of State for the Environment, Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Hirst, Lord Justice Robert Walker and Mr Justice Harman) 18 December 1997.

The Court of Appeal dismissed the appellant's appeal against an enforcement notice issued in respect of an alleged unauthorised change of use of land.

An established use certificate had been issued in 1987, certifying that the use of certain land on the towpath at Shepperton "for mooring of nine residential houseboats" had been established within the meaning of the statutory provisions then in force. In 1991 a craft named *Sunbeam II* was moored off the towpath. The appellant said it was a houseboat, but an enforce-

ment notice was issued by the local planning authority, describing it as a stationary floating platform on which a prefabricated wooden dwelling-house was affixed.

The appellant appealed against the enforcement notice. The Inspector appointed to consider the appeal treated the test as being whether *Sunbeam II* would be recognisable as a boat to the man in the street, and concluded that the craft would be seen as a two-storey house standing on a floating platform and was not, as a matter of fact and degree, a boat.

The Secretary of State, on appeal against the Inspector's decision, reached the same conclusion. The appellant applied to the High Court under section 289 of the 1990 Act, and the judge, having said that the meaning of an ordinary word was a matter of law, held that a house built on a floating platform which did not have a boat-like shape was not a houseboat even if it was capable of navigation.

John Howell QC (Simon Jacksons) for the appellant; Alan Alsbury (Treasury Solicitor) for the Secretary of State.

Lord Justice Robert Walker said that counsel for the appellant had submitted that a particular shape was not a necessary feature of a boat. The fallacy in the Inspector's decision and the judgment below was to fasten on the characteristic of being "boat-shaped" and then to treat that as the defining characteristic of boats in general and of residential houseboats in particular.

Whilst there was force in that criticism, the more general proposition that the expression "boat-shaped" was so imprecise as to be meaningless could not be accepted, nor was there anything absurd in saying that not all boats were boat-shaped.

The expression was imprecise but it conveyed the general idea of a curved, elongated container, tapering at the ends, and sometimes tapering more at one end than the other. Not

every craft recognisable as a boat had that shape.

It had further been submitted that given that the function of a houseboat was to provide residential accommodation on water, it was reasonable to expect that the superstructure might well resemble a house in appearance. That might, however, be met by the counter-argument that the more a houseboat looked like a house, the less it looked like a boat.

The appeal had been brought under section 289 of the 1990 Act on a point of law alone. It was only in a limited sense that the true meaning of an ordinary word in a legal document was a question of law.

The judge had erred if and insofar as he had thought he had to provide, as the answer to a question of law, a precise definition of "houseboat". Moreover, he had been wrong to take the view that as a matter of law a houseboat must be "boat-shaped". But a craft which consisted of a low rec-

tangular floating platform with a two-storey prefabricated building erected on it differed from a typical houseboat in more than the shape of its hull. It might diverge so far from the typical as no longer to merit the description "houseboat" as that expression would normally be used. Whether it did so was a question of fact or degree. It was a jury question.

The essential point was not whether the judge's reasoning had been correct, but whether the Secretary of State, in reliance on the Inspector's report, had misdirected himself in his approach to that jury question. Whilst his approach had tended to be over-analytical and had attached rather too much importance to dictionary definitions, nonetheless, his conclusion that "as a matter of fact and degree, *Sunbeam II* was not a houseboat for the purposes of the EUC" was unassailable in point of law. The appeal would be dismissed.

- Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

Body S... slide re... of Rodo

There was renewed speculation yesterday that Anita Roddick, flamboyant founder of the L'Oréal cosmetics retailer after a... might revive plans to... the environmentally... cosmetics retailer after a... warning forced the shares to... year low. But, as Nigel C... Correspondent, reports... the group faces a tough future... whether it remains a public... listed company or not.

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BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR, JEREMY WARNER
NEWS DESK: 0171-293 2636 FAX: 0171-293 2098 E-MAIL: INDYBUSINESS@INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

Body Shop share slide revives talk of Roddick buyout

There was renewed speculation yesterday that Anita Roddick, the flamboyant founder of the Body Shop, might revive plans to buy back the environmentally friendly cosmetics retailer after a profits warning forced the shares to a two-year low. But, as Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports, the group faces a tough future whether it remains a publicly quoted company or not.

Body Shop shares fell 7 per cent yesterday after the company said problems in America and the Far East meant the group would not be able to exceed last year's profits. The collapse took the shares to a level last seen in 1995 when Anita Roddick and her husband Gordon mounted a plan to take the company back into private hands.

Those plans were later abandoned when the Roddicks said the levels of debt required to fund the deal would have hampered the company's growth plans. But with the shares falling another 10p to 127p yesterday, valuing the company at £250m, analysts said it was possible that the couple may change their minds.

"The share price is getting back to a level where it might make sense," said John Richards, retail analyst at NatWest Securities. "Clearly what triggered the move last time was the shares falling to around the 110p mark."

Another analyst said the group still appeared to be struggling to balance its environmental credentials with its status as a quoted company. "They recently announced the largest ever environmental audit but if the business carries on like this there won't be much left to audit."

The Roddicks own 25 per cent of Body Shop, which was founded by Anita Roddick 21 years ago. A further 24 per cent is controlled by Ian McGlinn, a Sussex businessman who lent Ms Roddick £4,000 to help open her second shop in 1976.

Body Shop refused to comment on

whether a buyback plan was again under consideration. However, Angela Bawtree, the group's head of investor relations said: "I would be extremely surprised. It was looked at before but it was decided that it was not right for the business. There is no reason to think those views have changed."

Anita Roddick has never disguised her feelings about the City, once famously describing its workers as "those pin-striped dinosaurs in Throgmorton Street". But after they abandoned their buyback plans, they offered an olive branch to the Square Mile with a new dedication to improving shareholder value and a progressive dividend policy.

If Body Shop is not taken private it faces a difficult short-term future in the public gaze as it battles against difficult markets in the America and Far East and pedestrian growth in the UK.

In a trading update yesterday the company revealed that group like for like sales in the 10 weeks to 3 January were flat with sales in the US down by 4 per cent and by 8 per cent in Asia. It said problems in these markets would mean operating profits this year would be broadly in line with the previous year's £38.4m. Analysts had been expecting £41.5m.

Asia has been one of Body Shop's fastest growing markets and last year accounted for almost 15 per cent of profits. But the financial turmoil in the region has taken its toll and the group is now reconsidering its plans there. "We are taking a conservative view with regard to trade in South-east Asia," it said.

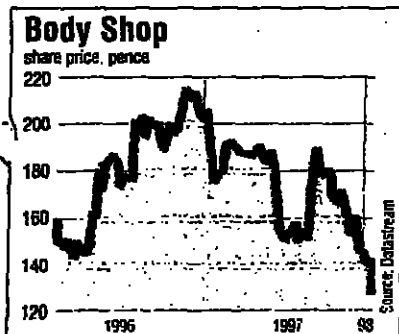
The group said it will be particularly careful with opening plans in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. However, it is continuing to expand rapidly in Japan and will open 25-30 stores a year there.

US sales have been hit by a highly competitive market in which rivals began cutting prices aggressively well before Christmas. In the UK sales rose by 2 per cent on a same store basis.

Nick Bubb, retail analyst at SG Securities said the figures were "clearly disappointing" and that the company would "probably not fare much better in the new year either". Mark Josefson at Panmure Gordon said the group faced "two or three years of modest progress".

Others noted that the company was not in such a parlous state as Laura Ashley. Body Shop is profitable and has a strong balance sheet with no debts.

John Richards at NatWest said the group had a strong brand name and was good at developing new products. However, he said its problems were at the operating level in the running of its stores. He said it was therefore "risky" that the group was increasing the number of company managed stores at the expense of those run by franchisees.



Sports shops sprint ahead of general fashion retailers

Two sports groups reported buoyant Christmas trading updates yesterday, providing further evidence that the boom in branded sportswear is taking share from traditional clothing retailers.

Blacks Leisure, which owns the First Sport chain of sports shops, increased same-store sales by 8 per cent in the 44 weeks to 3 January. Sports Division, the sports retailer that acquired the Olympus Sports shops from Sears, also turned in an athletic performance.

It saw Christmas and new year sales rise by 11 per cent on a like-for-like basis in the 10 weeks to 3 January. The company is expected to seek a stock market listing in the summer with a possible valuation of around £250m. JJB Sports, the fast-growing sports retailer, also reported buoyant sales earlier this month.

The upbeat figures contrast with a more mixed message emerging from the general fashion retailers. While some fashion groups, such as Burton, have done well, others have struggled. House of Fraser and Sainsbury's have disappointed while Storehouse, the Bhs and Mothercare

group, issued a pedestrian trading update yesterday.

"There is a feeling that the popularity of branded sportswear is affecting sales in other areas of youth-oriented clothing," said one analyst.

Though Storehouse's figures were not as bad as some analysts had been expecting the group was still hit by several profit downgrades. The company said its sales in the three months to 3 January were 6.3 per cent ahead of the same period last year though this figure included contributions from newly opened stores. It said it had resisted the temptation to cut prices ahead of Christmas, enabling group margins to increase by 0.8 percentage points.

"Our pre-Christmas trading stance proved to be successful," said Storehouse chief executive Keith Edelman. "We achieved a much better balance of sales and margins before Christmas at both Bhs and Mothercare by trading significantly more goods at full price than last year until our sale period which started the day after Boxing Day."

— Nigel Cope

Nationwide cuts fixed-rate mortgages

Nationwide, the UK's largest building society, stepped up the mortgage battle with its stock market rivals by cutting three of its fixed-rate mortgages. The building society also re-affirmed its pledge to hold variable rates unchanged unless the Bank of England increased base rates again. Together, these moves will benefit more than 1 million homeowners.

Philip Williamson, Nationwide's marketing and commercial director, said: "Our new range of highly attractive fixed rates combine certainty for the fixed-rate period with the reassurance of a competitive variable rate afterwards."

Nationwide has reduced two, three and five-year fixed-rate mortgages by 0.4 per cent, a move made possible by recent falls in long-term interest rates.

The two-year fixed rate at Nationwide is now 5.49 per cent. The three-year fixed rate is 6.19 per cent and the five-year rate is 6.64 per cent.

Bradford & Bingley's 343,000 borrowers were less fortunate, as the building society ended a four-month mortgage freeze with a 0.5 per cent increase in its variable rates.

From 1 February, Bradford & Bingley's variable rate for "loyal" borrowers will be 8.25 per cent. The rate for other borrowers — customers of less than two years' standing — will be 8.45 per cent.

Nationwide's variable rate remains unchanged at 8.10 per cent. But both mutuals are charging less than the high street banks and the converted building societies. The standard mortgage rate is 8.7 per cent.

— Lea Peterson



The Asian economic crisis claimed another victim yesterday after Samsung, the South Korean electronics giant, said it was scaling back its European headquarters in London. The decision will result in the loss of 33 jobs at Samsung's head offices in Brentford, west London, originally chosen for their proximity to Heathrow.

Samsung decided late last year not to proceed with the second phase of its £450m manufacturing site at Wymondley park in the North-east, which employs 1,300 making televisions, computer monitors and microwave ovens.

Another Korean conglomerate, Hyundai, has abandoned plans for an electronics plant in Scotland but LG is pressing ahead with a £1.6bn investment in South Wales.

— Michael Harrison
Asian markets, page 21
Photograph: Andrew Burman

Rates dilemma lingers as pound breaches DM3 barrier

The economy suffered a double blow yesterday. The pound passed the DM3 barrier for the first time since August, while new figures showed that the Government borrowed £1bn more than expected last month. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, says the Bank of England has a bigger headache than the Chancellor.

Disappointing figures on government borrowing for December coincided yesterday with a decisive move by the pound above 3.00 German marks and 10.00 French francs. Of the two, the fresh jump in the sterling exchange rate will pose the bigger policy problem.

Analysts were divided as to whether it would sway the Bank of England against raising interest rates after next month's meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee

— although the expectation of a rate rise to counter home-grown inflationary pressures was a common explanation for the pound's fresh gains.

Figures due tomorrow, for retail sales in December, and Friday, for GDP in the final quarter of 1997, are therefore likely to be of special interest to City soothsayers. They will be looking for signs that growth is slowing fast enough to prevent the Bank from raising rates in the face of accelerating pay growth.

The continuing strength of the dollar, which often tugs the pound with it, was also blamed for the rise above the key psychological barrier against the German currency.

Meanwhile, yesterday's figures showed that the public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) amounted to £1.4bn last month, well above City expectations. Although most City experts still reckon the Chancellor can beat his £3.5bn target for the PSBR in 1997/98, especially with the normal January surplus of receipts over spending still to come, the

news dented their confidence.

Taking account of several special factors, the underlying explanation for the shortfall was a £3.3bn rise in departmental spending during the month.

On the positive side, the windfall tax on the utilities added £2.6bn to revenues, and tobacco duties were £400m higher than the same month a year earlier as payments were brought forward ahead of the duty increase announced in the July Budget.

On the other hand, self-assessment reduced income tax payments by more than £1bn by shifting them into January. Interest payments on government debt were also increased to the tune of £1bn by a timing shift, as they are increasingly bunched in December and June.

But the real culprit was the surge in expenditure following several months when departments had been spending far less than the previous year.

Although in November's "Pre-Budget" the Chancellor allowed for spending this year

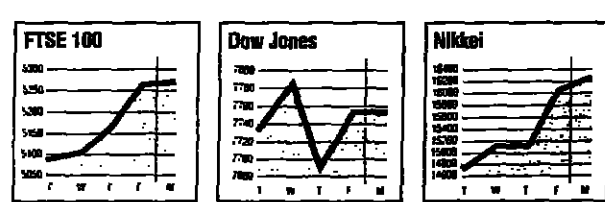
to be 1.1 per cent higher than last year, it had been running at a level 1 per cent lower than a year earlier. December's jump took this to a still-tough 0.5 per cent down on the year.

Adam Cole, of HSBC James Capel, said sharp falls in unemployment had helped reduce the government's level of spending. "With the pace of decline likely to moderate, and pressures on public sector pay likely to intensify, controlling spending will become more challenging," he said. But, despite this pessimism, he still predicted a borrowing requirement close to target. Others stuck to more optimistic forecasts of as low as £6bn.

The cumulative PSBR reached £6.1bn last month, down from £16.3bn the previous year. Excluding privatisation proceeds, the underlying borrowing total for the year to date was £7.9bn, down from £20.6bn in 1996/97. Expenditure last month remained £0.6bn lower than at the same stage last year, compared with a Treasury prediction of a £4.9bn rise during the year as a whole.

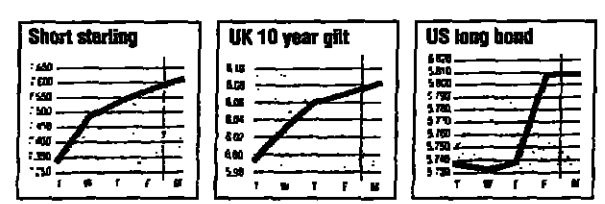
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STOCK MARKETS



Index	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	5273.60	10.50	0.20	5367.30	4167.80	3.39
FTSE 250	4832.80	20.20	0.42	4963.80	4384.20	3.27
FTSE 350	2627.90	6.00	0.24	2670.50	2070.40	3.37
FTSE All Share	2467.54	5.96	0.24	2507.66	2055.17	3.35
FTSE SmallCap	2562.60	6.68	0.26	2607.40	2182.10	3.07
FTSE Redchips	1286.00	5.00	0.39	1348.50	1225.20	3.31
FTSE AIM	977.50	-0.40	-0.04	1138.00	965.90	1.18
Dow Jones	7753.55	61.78	0.80	8299.03	6356.78	1.77
Nikkei	16262.04	215.58	1.34	20910.79	14488.21	0.95
Hang Seng	9400.42	500.38	5.62	10820.31	7908.13	4.51
Dax	4284.94	100.48	2.40	4459.89	2972.77	1.72

INTEREST RATES

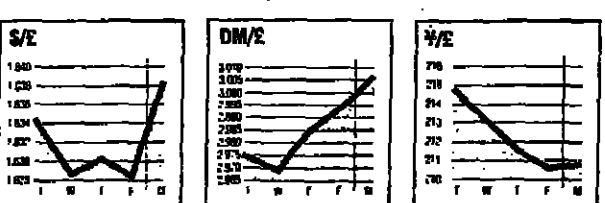


Money Market Rates	1 yr	3 m	6 m	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
UK	7.63	7.27	7.09	6.88	6.08	6.05
US	5.63	0.98	0.99	0.98	5.53	0.98
Japan	0.72	0.23	0.67	0.12	1.94	0.83
Germany	3.58	0.44	3.81	0.62	5.06	0.68

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls	Price	Change	%
Alfred Holt		196.50	28.00	16.62
Smithline Bages		743.00	61.00	8.54
WFC		151.50	11.50	8.21
Hazwood		195.50	10.50	5.88
Philips		104.50	-10.50	-9.13
Brit Sky		370.50	-31.50	-8.68
Bluecross		440	-35	-7.97
Body Shop		127.5	-10	-7.87

CURRENCIES



Pound	at 100	Change	%	Dollar	at 100	Change	%
Dollar	1.6384	+0.450	2.80	Starling	0.6104	-0.179	-0.6001
D-Mark	3.0065	+1.370	4.56	D-Mark	1.6389	+0.520	3.1823
Yen	210.82	-20.10	-9.53	Yen	128.74	-20.41	-11.79
£ index	105.10	+0.20	0.19	£ index	109.80	-0.50	-0.45

OTHER INDICATORS

at 100	Change	%	at 100	Change	%
Brit (S)	14.82	-0.02	22.86	119.90	3.70
Gold (S)	287.54	-2.61	352.75	160.00	3.60
Silver (S)	9.77	-0.03	4.75	Base Rates	7.25

www.bloomberg.com

source: Bloomberg

Astec rejects plan by US parent to buy out minority

A bizarre takeover battle erupted yesterday when Astec BSR, the electronic components manufacturer, became the subject of a possible hostile bid from Emerson Electric, the US giant which owns the majority of its shares. Astec's independent directors promptly rejected the approach and threatened to take legal action.

Peter Thal Larsen reports on an episode that has left shareholders seething.

In an approach to Astec's independent directors, Emerson offered to buy out the 49 per cent of Astec it did not own at the prevailing market price of 111p. At the same time, the group threatened to remove all executive directors except Howard Lance, the Astec chief executive who is a former Emerson employee, and replace them with non-executives appointed by Emerson. The group also said it would vote down any attempt by Astec to pay a dividend.

George Lamke, Emerson's chief operating officer — and a former Astec chief executive — said: "We're giving shareholders the choice to get out at the market price, recognising that the dividend is going to be cut. I think that's fair."

He also suggested that the turmoil in Asian markets would damage Astec's sales, while the group was not large enough to participate in the consolidation that was taking place in its industries.

In a statement, the independent directors rejected Emerson's proposal as "wholly inadequate",

adding that the group's results for the year ended 31 December 1997 would be "at least in line with market expectations." The directors also said they were seeking legal advice about the American group's threats.

"Our sales are predominantly in US dollars, our major markets are in the US, yet we manufacture in Asia," said finance director Mike Arrowsmith. "We benefit from the currency devaluations." He added that Astec had cash resources of \$100m on its balance sheet.

The statement was signed by independent directors including Brian Christopher. Astec's non-executive chairman, Rod Olsen, deputy chief executive of Cable & Wireless, and Robin Gourlay, chairman of Anglian Water. Three of Astec's executive directors, including Mr Arrowsmith, also signed.

Astec shares have languished since last November, when the group issued a profit warning, announcing that its plans to gain market share would pressurise its profit margins. Yesterday, however, Astec's shares rose 6p to 117p, suggesting that investors thought Emerson would have to offer more.

The offer is a U-turn by Emerson. When its shareholding in Astec rose above 50 per cent last March, the group informed the board that it did not consider the threshold significant, and that the change would not have "any impact on senior management of the group or its board of directors". Market observers were amazed. One analyst said shareholders were furious: "Of course we all expected a bid at some time. We didn't expect to get a big price, but we at least did expect a fair price."

GPG bids £42m to put Polly in its pocket

Bluebird Toys, the Polly Pocket to Plasticine group, came under attack yesterday when Guinness Peat Group (GPG), Sir Ron Brierley's investment vehicle, launched a £42m cash bid for the company.

However, Bluebird promptly dismissed the bid as "opportunistic" and advised shareholders to take no action.

GPG has been aggressively building a stake in Bluebird since July, and currently holds 22.87 per cent of the shares. Sir Ron said: "The choice for shareholders is simple: do nothing and face continuing erosion of investment value or act to secure a premium price for their Bluebird shares."

In recent years, Bluebird has been little short of a disaster in investment terms. Following a series of profit disappointments, the company's share price has crashed from a high of 386p in 1995 to 85p on Friday, the last day before yesterday's 101p bid emerged.

Blake Nixon, GPG chief executive, said the decision to bid was prompted by Bluebird's latest

profit warning, which came in November when Mattel, the US toy giant, cancelled a deal to distribute Polly Pocket in North America after sales of the dolls dried up. "There's all this potential there. When is it going to be realised?" he asked.

Yesterday, however, Bluebird shares jumped 27.5p to 112.5p, suggesting that investors felt GPG's bid was not high enough. David Sandilands, Bluebird's finance director, pointed out that, as at 31 December, the group had net cash of £19m — equivalent to 46p a share. "If you take that into account the bid looks quite cheap compared to other deals in the sector," said one analyst.

The relatively low offer led some observers to suggest that GPG was merely trying to flush out another bidder. "They've put Bluebird into play," said one. But Hasbro, the US toy group which owns 6.7 per cent of Bluebird, was thought unlikely to enter the fray, since that would jeopardise existing deals between Bluebird and Mattel, Hasbro's rival.

— Peter Thal Larsen

January 1998

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Tesco lives up to expectations

The market has come to expect good news from Tesco and Britain's number one supermarket group did not disappoint yesterday. A like-for-like sales uplift of 6.5 per cent over the Christmas and new year period was at the top end of expectations and was all the more laudable given that Tesco was up against tough comparisons for the previous year.

Tesco had made the point in July that it would shortly be coming up against sales figures that were boosted by the "Unbeatable Value" price initiative which was launched in September 1996. Its current sales growth does represent a slight slowdown from the heady 8 per cent achieved in the summer, but is still some distance ahead of the industry's average of 3.5 per cent. Sainsbury's will struggle to match it. Safeway won't come close.

The point to be aware of, however, is that while the UK supermarkets have had a terrific run, ratings are now extremely high.

Supermarket shares have outperformed the market by 20 per cent since the July budget, which showed that the new government was not about to launch a series of tax-raising initiatives and screw down consumer spending. In that time consumers have shown increasing willingness to trade up to higher-margin ranges while the stores have benefited from longer opening hours and penetration of loyalty card spending.

The Far Eastern turmoil has also helped as supermarkets' stable UK earnings looked increasingly attractive in more turbulent markets. In the short term, the grocers continue to ride the interest rate cycle as higher rates make sterling stronger, which helps supermarkets' buying power.

But with rates nearing their peak, the City is almost looking for an excuse to take profits on some of these stocks. If an interest rate move is not the signal it could be corporate action such as an Asda-Safeway merger that would send shockwaves through the sector with price campaigns that would damage margins.

Tesco's shares, up 0.5p to 512.5p yesterday, trade on a forward p/e of 18,

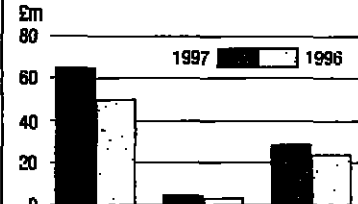
Ashtead: At a glance

Market value: £586m, share price 193.5p (+0)

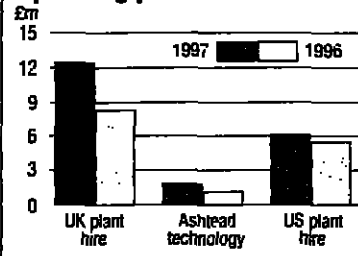
Half year to 31 October

Trading record	1995	1996	1997	1996	1997
Turnover (£m)	67.3	95.9	147.6	74.4	94.8
Pre-tax profits (£m)	13.6	16.8	28.3	14.4	17.2
Earnings per share (p)	10.7	13.0	18.0	7.63	9.16
Dividends per share (p)	2.33	3.04	3.65	0.72	0.53

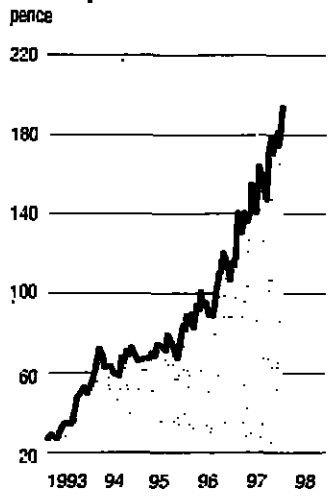
Turnover



Operating profit



Share price



assuming full year profits of £820m, and Sainsbury's and Asda are not far behind. Tesco is a quality company and remains a long-term hold but at these levels it is no time to buy. And at some stage in the next few months the sector could suffer a bout of profit-taking.

Ashtead looks set to grow

What a change a few years make. In 1992 Ashtead was a plain old plant hire making a profit of a few million pounds a year. Now chairman Peter Lewis talks about the group being an "equipment outsource" with "profit centres" around the UK. Behind the gobbledygook lies the transformation of Ashtead, which has, almost singlehandedly, changed the face of the plant hire business. Its record speaks for itself. Profits have rocketed and the shares have outperformed the market by more than 300 per cent over the last five years.

Ashtead's secret lies in the search for new clients. Instead of relying on the construction industry it has gone picking up work from the likes of Rail-track and local authorities as well as traditional customers. This has ensured a sharp rise in earnings despite a lean spell in the building industry. It has also managed to crack the notoriously difficult US market, building up a decent market share over there despite stiff competition. But can Ashtead now continue to grow at such a cracking pace?

In the UK the hire market is still expanding strongly and the bigger players such as Ashtead are using their clout to pick up a big chunk of the new work on offer. Further consolidation throughout the industry should bring acquisition opportunities and a pick up in UK building industry is also helping hire rates and therefore margins. The strong pound and costs of building new depots has temporarily depressed US margins but the market over there should also continue to grow rapidly.

House broker Hoare Govett forecasts profits of £36.4m for the year to

April of £36.4m, rising to £49.4m, putting the shares, which were unchanged at 193.5p yesterday, on a prospective p/e ratio of 21 falling to 16. That means Ashtead is sitting on a steep premium to the building sector but it remains a good long-term bet.

Share incentives work for Mitie

There are companies which take employee share ownership seriously, and then there is Mitie. The group is so convinced that workers should be investors that it has named itself after a slogan: Mitie is short for Management Incentive Through Investment Equity.

Not exactly subtle, but so far it's worked. In the past five years, turnover has trebled while profits have quadrupled. And judging by results for the six months to last September, which showed pre-tax profits rising 48 per cent to £4.8m, the trend is likely to continue.

Mitie is a beneficiary of the same outsourcing trend which has propelled Rentokil into the FTSE 100 index. Of course, Mitie is much smaller and is in different businesses: engineering, painting and plant hire on the building services side; cleaning and maintenance in its support services division.

But it is on the right track. Rather than compete on price to win contracts the group is boosting margins by selling to bigger customers who are willing to pay up for better service. That helped margins rise from 3.6 per cent to 4.4 per cent in the half year.

Another benefit of having large customers is being able to cross-sell services. Executive chairman David Telling reckons 10 per cent of its customers currently employ different parts of Mitie. He wants to get that up to 75 per cent. The strategy allows for moving into other services, such as grounds maintenance, which could be sold to the same customers.

Mitie wants to keep up its success by making sure its subsidiaries keep their local roots. The worry is that as it gets larger it finds it harder to keep an eye on those businesses. But judged by unchanged full-year profit forecasts of £10.6m there's no sign of a slowdown yet. Those figures put the shares, which gained 4p to an all-time high of 261.5p yesterday, on a forward p/e ratio of 26. Worth tucking away.

Allied Colloids battle bursts into life as Ciba joins fray

The battle for control of Allied Colloids, the speciality chemicals group, exploded yesterday as Hercules, its US rival, twice increased its hostile bid for the group to foil an approach from Ciba, the Swiss pharmaceuticals giant. Andrew Yates reports on a takeover tussle that has burst into life.

The saga began at 9am when Hercules increased its bid from 135p to 175p a share, valuing Allied Colloids at more than £1.2bn and effectively ending all hopes that the group would retain its independence.

It took just 12 minutes for Allied Colloids to fire back by announcing that it was in discussions with Ciba about a £82.5p bid designed to bury Hercules' hopes. The two sides had been in discussions with Allied's management all weekend in an effort to thrash out a deal.

Ciba promptly ordered, BZW, its brokers, to launch a raid on Allied's shares in an

effort to seal the bid. By early afternoon it had bought 4.5 per cent of Allied in the market.

However, just as analysts were predicting that Ciba had won the day, Hercules struck again. At 4.26pm - four minutes before the market closed - the US group announced it had decided to up its offer to 195p a share, worth almost £1.35bn. Even this did not signal the end of the battle. Ciba was last night locked in talks with advisers and Allied's management, and is considering raising its offer.

The fireworks surprised the City, which before yesterday had assumed that a bid of 175p was enough to win control of Bradford-based Allied, whose shares had been priced as low as 101p in recent months.

Hercules' increased offer came just days after Allied produced its final defence document. It has been fighting for control of the British group since November and has consistently attacked its profits record and management. Few observers had expected the group to raise the stakes this high. Allied Colloids shares soared as the fight over the company mounted, and closed

the day more than 16 per cent higher at 196.5p.

Keith Elliott, Hercules' chairman and chief executive, said: "Our second final offer of 195p per share in cash is more than generous and we are confident that shareholders will see it as such."

Hercules claimed its increased offer would still prove to be earnings-enhancing. Analysts believe that to achieve this it would have to slash costs, which could bring severe job losses in the UK and the US.

One analyst said: "Hercules are desperate to do a deal after losing out to Allied when they bought CPS (a US speciality chemicals business) and to ICI for other chemical businesses. Ciba will have to think long and hard about trumping what is a very good price for Allied."

Industry sources were suggesting last night that Ciba would be unlikely to go much higher than 195p if it did choose to weigh in with a higher offer. The bidders are fighting over Allied Colloids' technology, which separates particles from liquids and is used widely in water and sewage treatment as well as the textile and paper industries.

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Far East turmoil will knock Diageo profits

Diageo, the drinks giant formed by the merger of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan, yesterday became the latest casualty of the financial turmoil in the Far East. The group warned that the collapse in the value of Asian currencies and the strength of the pound against the US dollar would cost it £200m.

Profits at GrandMet and Guinness have already been hit by £140m in 1997, largely in line with the group's own forecasts and analysts' predictions. Diageo went further by forecasting another £60m shortfall in the first six months of this year.

The main problem has been

in Thailand, one of Diageo's main markets in Asia. Analysts say the group traditionally makes profits of £50m-£60m in the country, but the slowdown in the local economy has caused annual earnings to fall by up to £25m. Customers have switched from higher margin brands such as Diageo's Johnnie Walker whisky to cheaper spirits. The fall in the Thai baht has also reduced revenues in sterling terms.

Profits in Korea rose in 1997 but Diageo admitted that profits began to fall in the last quarter of the year. City observers believe the situation in Asia could get worse before it gets better and

profits could be hit even harder in the second half of 1998.

Tony Greener, Diageo's joint chairman, said: "During the last 12 months market conditions have been in line with expectations, with the exception of UDV Asia Pacific, where current economic conditions have affected our business. However, profits for UDV Asia Pacific represent only 8 per cent of Diageo's pre-forma trading profit."

Analysts have already downgraded profits forecasts from around £2bn to around £1.85bn for the year to June. Diageo's shares closed down 2p at 563p.

— Andrew Yates

THE INDEPENDENT

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NFC sells truck unit to Volvo for £49m

Increased hopes of a share buyback at NFC, following the £49m sale of its BRS truck rental and contract hire business to Volvo, sent shares surging at the logistics and freight group. Terry Macalister reports on the latest stage in its disposal programme.

More than 8.5 million NFC shares were traded and the stock rose 11.5p to 151.5p on the back of the increase in the group's cash mountain following the BRS disposal, the seventh asset sale in six months.

The company flagged up the possibility of returning capital to shareholders at the end of last year after unveiling a fall in pre-tax profits from £105.2m to £87.8m for the 12 months to September 30.

Yesterday it insisted that a definite decision on its cash pile would not be made until June. It said the Government's decision to scrap advance corporation tax had made the question more tricky.

David Finch, the finance director, said: "There are three options: buying something; investing in our organic business; or returning capital to shareholders. They are all still very much under consideration."

Nigel Utley, analyst with Greig Middleton, said the Volvo

deal put the last piece in a corporate restructuring aimed at improving profitability. "The shares have risen because NFC received a good price for the assets. It is also belated recognition of a share buyback."

NFC, floated on the stock market in 1989 after a management buyout from the government seven years previously, has made it clear it is interested in US acquisitions. But it has also held tentative - and so far fruitless - merger talks with the UK-based Ocean Group.

The new management team at NFC, headed by the chairman Sir Christopher Bland, started its shake-up with the £26m sale last year of its Lynx parcel delivery service. This was followed by the disposal of BRS car leasing and Pickford transport interests in the US.

The BRS truck rental activities have been purchased by Volvo Contract Services (VCS), the ambitious Warwick-based subsidiary of the Swedish car and truck manufacturing giant.

While analysts were surprised at the amount paid, Barrie Cload, managing director of VCS, said his company had got a good deal. "It is a perfect fit with our existing business and offers enormous potential," he said.

He expected to increase the number of trucks used by BRS and said his company was interested in other avenues of expansion, including insurance products.

Stagecoach orders another £25m worth of trains

Porterbrook, the rolling stock leasing subsidiary of Stagecoach, the bus and train group, has decided to place a second speculative train order worth an estimated £25m. Stagecoach said the decision followed "significant interest" from train operating companies after the company announced the first such order in November last year. That order, for diesel multiple units (DMUs), was also worth £25m.

Stagecoach said the new trains were expected to be delivered in early 1999 and would be available to train operating companies on short-term rental agreements. It said Adtranz was the preferred bidder to build the two- and three-car DMUs.

Woolwich may bid for bank

Woolwich, the former building society, has emerged as one of a dozen candidates in the running to buy Credit Foncier, the ailing French bank. Dresdner Bank and Deutsche Bank, both of Germany, have also expressed interest, according to sources close to the negotiations. Credit Foncier is currently technically insolvent, and would need an injection of 4bn to 5bn French francs (£400m to £500m) to turn it into a going concern, analysts said. The eventual purchaser will also have to repay FF2.4bn to Caisse des Depots et Consignations, which last year bought 90 per cent of Credit Foncier shares at the French government's request.

Andersen counter-claim

Andersen Consulting's hopes of a swift end to its \$11bn (£6.7bn) dispute with its sister organisation Arthur Andersen receded yesterday after it emerged that the accounting firm would be claiming that significant legal complexities meant it needed more time to formulate a formal response to the Paris arbitrators. While Andersen appears ready to break with the consulting arm that became a separate business in 1989, it is understood that in a formal counter-claim to be issued in several weeks, it will be arguing that both equity and contract demand that it be heavily compensated.

BNP joins Peregrine race

The race to snap up the most lucrative parts of Peregrine Investment Holdings, the Hong Kong financial conglomerate which went into liquidation last week, stepped up a gear yesterday as Banque Nationale de Paris became the latest bank to enter the fray. The list of potential bidders also includes Donaldson Lufkin & Jenrette, Bankers Trust, the Bank of China, Citibank of Canada, Banco Santander and Banco Bilbao.

A swift sale looks likely as Price Waterhouse, Peregrine's liquidator, has asked for firm expressions of interest by the end of the week. "We are very encouraged by the response of so many high quality institutions," said Mark Elwood, managing director of Peregrine Securities UK.

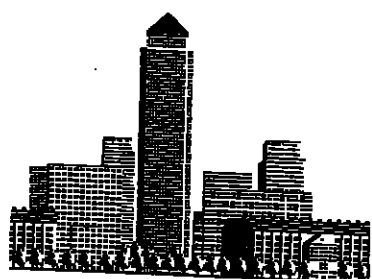
Alldays plans 2,000 new shops

Alldays, the grocery store chain, yesterday disclosed plans to buy or open 2,000 new convenience shops in the next five years, employing more than 20,000 workers, many of whom would be part-time employees. Most of the new stores will be in the Midlands and the North of England.

A lot of the outlets would be new openings, while some would be buyouts of existing family-run shops. The stores will be mostly situated in residential areas, with some open 24 hours a day. Alldays owns more than 275 stores and has 325 franchise outlets.

COMPANY RESULTS				
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Adams (I)	26.67m (28.78m)	2.87m (2.78m)	6.45p (6.1p)	3.5p (3.5p)
Ashtead (I)	94.8m (74.4m)	18.4m (14.4m)	9.74p (7.63p)	0.83p (0.72p)
Cardiff Property (F)	2.92m (1.08m)	0.474m (0.293m)	13.7p (7.7p)	3.1p (2.05p)
Fairfield Enterprises (F)	59.41m (53.45m)	1.73m (2.103m)	13.2p (18.2p)	2.7p (4.7p)
Matrix Healthcare (F)	2.14m (1.16m)	0.167m (0.185m)	5.8p (6.7p)	6.0p (6.75p)
MTIE Group (F)	108m (81.34m)	4.8m (3.3m)	4.4p (3.2p)	1.1p (0.9p)

(F) - Fiscal (I) - Interim EPS is pre-exceptional Dividend to be paid as a FID



OUTLOOK ON THE BATTLE FOR ALLIED COLLOIDS. MORE SPIRIT MERGERS AND THE PROBLEM WITH STERLING

Swiss muscle in on Hercules' bid

The year's dullest takeover battle has sprung spectacularly to life. Until yesterday morning the most interesting thing about Hercules' bid for Allied Colloids was the improbable name of the former and the fact that the latter rhymes with humorboids, which is faintly appropriate for a company that makes its living by separating solids from liquids. In the space of eight hours the boys from Wilmington, Delaware, with a little help from the Swiss chemicals group Ciba, managed to change all that.

The US suitor began the day with a bid of 155p on the table. By the end of play it had been forced to increase its final offer twice to 195p after the Swiss had stepped in and bought a 4.7 per cent stake. With Ciba now indicating it is prepared to top even 195p, Hercules will almost certainly find itself having to up the ante for a third time today.

What kind of "speciality chemicals" does Allied specialise in exactly and is everyone in this three-cornered contest on them? A business that was bumbling along with a share price struggling to stay above £1 a few months ago is suddenly about to be bought for more than twice that. Supposing the price inches up to £1.5bn, that represents nearly four times sales and an exit multiple in the mid-20s.

Since 175p was deemed to be a lumpy price, it is hard to see how Allied is worth this much. But there is a history to Hercules' and Allied. The Americans lost out to Allied in the bidding for another

US speciality chemicals business, CPS, a year ago. This time they are not to be outmanoeuvred.

All of which is good news for those with shares in Allied and the half dozen or so similar UK speciality chemicals companies. The twin drivers of globalisation and specialisation make it highly likely that more such businesses will be swallowed up as the industry's big players look for new products to pipe through their distribution chains.

Whether it is quite such good news for jobs in Bradford is doubtful. Whoever wins the day will have their work cut out making this acquisition earnings enhancing. It might just about be possible to accomplish the trick, but not without taking the axe to costs with the same gusto that they are piling on the price.

Allied Domecq needs to act

Ever since Guinness and Grand Metropolitan announced merger plans last May, Allied Domecq has been under pressure from City investors and investment bankers to do something similar. There is more to this than blind adherence to the me-too principle.

Diageo is set to become a truly awesome distribution and marketing power once the full benefits of the merger begin to show through a few years hence. Allied is number two in the branded spirits market, but even if it were

to merge its liquor interests with those of the next biggest player, Seagram, it would still not be as big as Diageo. Keeping Allied as it is can no longer be an option for Allied's chairman, Sir Christopher Hogg, and his chief executive, Tony Hales.

The problem is that the available options for merger appear so limited. When Guinness and Grand Met tied the knot, Allied was left out in the cold; there is no other sizeable British player of note left. Most international drinks companies that might make a credible partner for Allied are family controlled, including Seagram, the most likely bride. Even assuming one or other of these families could be persuaded to tolerate the necessary dilution, there would still be an issue of control and management to sort out. The City would have a big problem with anything that might become captive to family control, even if that were through a minority shareholding.

All the same, this may be the only path left open to Sir Christopher. Merely to set up a joint distribution agreement with Seagram probably doesn't go far enough: such a limited arrangement would have neither the deep cost-cutting potential of the Diageo combination, nor would there be the same opportunity for coordination of marketing and cross subsidy in brand promotion.

One alternative would be for Allied to sell the business outright for cash and channel the money into its leisure activities or return it to shareholders, but

that surely would be a dreadfully defeatist route. Allied's liquor and drinks business is still number two in the world; it must be possible to do something with all that potential. Something is precisely what Sir Christopher has to do. If he does nothing, the shares will head south again with speed. Not a comfortable position to be in.

The horns of the Bank's dilemma

Is there no light at the end of the exchange rate tunnel for British exporters? Unfortunately not. As there is no single reason for the pound's strength, there is no compelling reason for it to fall any time soon.

If greater domestic inflationary pressure in the UK, bringing the prospect of a widening interest-rate differential compared with other countries, were the only explanation for the high exchange rate, then the Bank of England could lance the boil by getting rates quickly to their peak.

Unfortunately, it is only one reason among several, and the other influences can not be reversed so easily. They include the dollar slipstream effect and the more recent hedging against EMU effect. Both could keep sterling at painful levels.

While industry exaggerates the pain, the sustained exchange rate appreciation is probably starting to take its toll on Britain's balance of payments. This will slow growth overall, but not necessarily domestic demand.

Here is the Bank of England's dilemma. Does the external slowdown outweigh the domestic inflationary push from wage growth and consumer spending? Inflation is very likely to pick up again later this year just because of the lagged effects of pre-election laxness on interest rates. But how much more damage on the inflation front would be done by not raising rates any further now?

This is obviously a difficult judgement for members of the Monetary Policy Committee to make. The chances are that this year will see both weaker growth and rising inflation, with relatively little the Bank can do about it. The Bank is also handicapped by a very optimistic inflation forecast, which means that once inflation begins to overshoot it, the MPC will find it difficult to justify not raising interest rates even if this is thought the wrong thing to do.

Perhaps the other economic figures out this week - retail sales and GDP - will settle things, but analysts are too prone to seeking a definitive answer from a single statistic.

It is an intrinsically hard call to make. Raising rates by a quarter point in February and announcing that they have probably reached their peak might help take some of the steam out of sterling, though this plainly didn't do the trick for anything other than a brief period it was last tried in the summer.

Perhaps the best policy would be for the MPC to adopt a wait and see approach after all.

Russian oil merger poses threat to BP and Shell

A powerful merger of Russian oil giants, announced yesterday, threatens to damage the competing ambitions of Shell and British Petroleum in the former Soviet Union. Terry Macolister reports.

The tie-up between Yukos Oil and Sibneft, blessed in a formal signing ceremony by Russian prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, provides them with a strong platform to launch a takeover bid for Rosneft, the last jewel in the Russian oil crown.

Both Shell and BP have declared their interest in Rosneft when it comes up for privatisation later this year. Yukos and Sibneft, which had previously said they would make a joint bid for Rosneft, are now seen as major contenders.

Shell, the world's largest private oil group, which announced in November a strategic alliance with Russian gas behemoth Gazprom, said its ambitions in the region remained undimmed.

But a spokesman accepted

the going would get tougher. He said: "We will be making a bid for Rosneft when the bidding process starts. But with increased deregulation in Russia we must expect there to be more competition."

BP, which last year formed its own joint venture with Sidanko in Russia, also shrugged off the new threat. A spokesman said: "It makes no difference to us. We will still consider bidding for Rosneft but our ambitions in Russia were never dependent on Rosneft."

Nick Clayton, oil analyst with Kleinwort Benson, says: "By putting together a formal link, Yukos and Sibneft have definitely strengthened their hand in the forthcoming [privatisation] auction."

Other Russian experts said the appearance of the prime minister at the conclusion of the merger talks is significant. They point out that Mr Chernomyrdin, who consolidated his power in a cabinet reshuffle at the weekend, is in poll position for head of state should President Yeltsin's health finally fail.

With political considerations playing a large role in Russia's commercial life, the fate of Rosneft could be decided partly

by Mr Chernomyrdin, who is close to Yukos leaders.

The Yukos-Sibneft merger, a first among top Russian companies, creates the largest oil group in the world in terms of proven reserves and the third largest in terms of oil production.

But its financial position could be stronger and many analysts expect Yukos, as the new venture will be called, to quickly find a new western partner. Talks have already taken place between Yukos and Amoco, Texaco and Elf Aquitaine have also been linked with the Russians.

The Russian oil markets have been alive with corporate manoeuvrings since the government decided last year to end the restrictions on foreign companies holding more than a 15 per cent stake in domestic groups.

The Yukos merger could also open up opportunities for well-financed Western oil companies as it could spark more oil sector consolidation as smaller firms struggle to compete with the bigger ones to raise finance.

"There is a good argument for saying this could be the start of further consolidation," said Jim Henderson, oil analyst with Renaissance Capital investment bank in Moscow.

UBS executives to lose out as Swiss banking giant names new management

SBC and UBS, the Swiss banks merging in a £15bn deal, will today reveal the names of up to 100 managers who will take the top jobs below board level in the new company.

SBC executives are expected

to fill the majority of the posts, a development that is likely further to depress morale at UBS, which is widely believed to have lost out in the deal.

After intense market speculation, the two banks con-

firmed last December they were to merge. The move is expected to cost around 3,500 City jobs, almost half of the banks' combined London workforce.

As well as losing out in the competition for top jobs, UBS,

which has been beset by a variety of difficulties in recent months, is expected to bear the brunt of the redundancies.

No details of job cuts are anticipated before early February, when the deal is due to be

formally approved by UBS and SBC shareholders.

But industry sources expect job losses to follow soon after the merger is officially approved.

— Lea Paterson

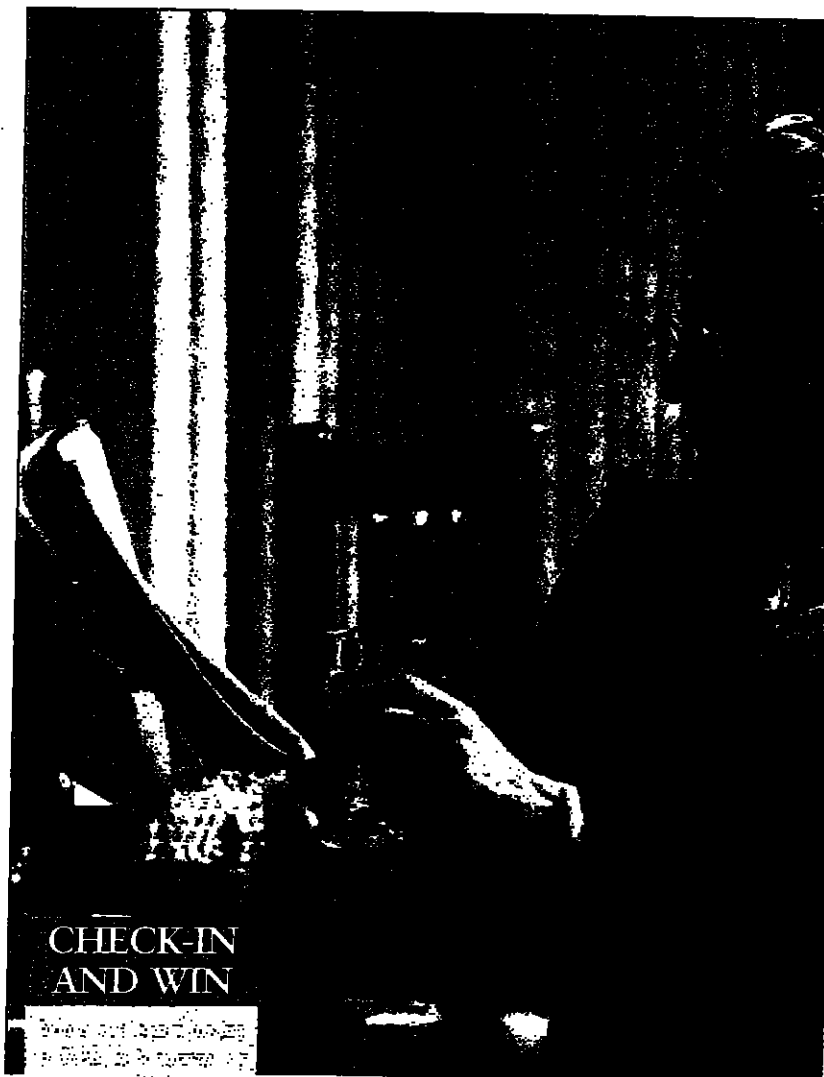
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Analysts divided as markets rebound throughout Asia

Share prices and the value of currencies rose in Asia as brave forecasters declared that the markets had finally bottomed out, although most Asian analysts remained sceptical. Stephen Vines in Hong Kong watched as spring came early to the Far Eastern markets yesterday.

Stock markets which were hit hardest registered the biggest gains. The Thai market gained almost 10 per cent, while the Malaysian market was up 9 per cent as Indonesia, Korea and Singapore made gains of around 6 per cent. Hong Kong did not quite manage a rise of 6 per cent.

Dealers were not able to absorb the news yesterday that European finance ministers plan to invite Michel Camdessus, managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to a future meeting to discuss the economic crisis. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

told reporters the leading industrialised countries had to "help our Asian colleagues through the currency situation.... We must discuss in the IMF how to avoid this happening again".

In Thailand there were hopes of a relaxation of some of the conditions of the IMF's \$17.2bn (£10.5bn) rescue package. Tarrin Nimmannahaeminda, the Finance Minister, is in Washington for talks with senior IMF officials. He is also looking for additional loans to boost the country's depleted reserves.

In Indonesia, where the government appears to be knocking under to the IMF's strict tutelage despite growing indications of social unrest, the financial markets were buoyed by news that five private Indonesian banks were to merge.

Plans by Bank Internasional Indonesia, one of Indonesia's top three private banks, to merge with Bank Danang Nasional and three smaller banks, were seen as a firm sign the country may be on the way to cleaning up its ailing financial industry. Most Asian markets are reporting an increase in international buying interest. Some of it is bargain-seeking

while other international fund managers appear to be covering short-term positions taken after betting on Asian markets declining further but finding them still rising modestly.

Currencies failed to match the performance of the equity markets but most Asian currencies gained against the dollar. The steady rise of the Japanese yen is providing encouragement in the region.

Although the market rises look impressive, the capitalisation of most Asian stock markets has fallen so low that even small scale buying can have a big impact. In Hong Kong, where the market capitalisation is far higher than in most Asian markets outside Japan, individual stocks move erratically on relatively small volumes.

Although the Hong Kong stock market registered a gain of 5.6 per cent, there was a tremor of disquiet following news of the closure of a medium sized stockbroker, CA Pacific Securities. It is part of the listed Capital Asia group. This is much smaller than the failure of Peregrine but provided a reminder of the difficulties local stock brokers are facing.

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Foostie gain evaporates as strong pound hammers exporters

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

The rampant pound, once again riding above three German marks, is hammering what was once Britain's industrial might. Exporters, particularly engineers, felt the brunt of the selling with Rolls-Royce, above 240p last month, diving 14p to 192p.

GKN crashed 70p to 1,148p. BTR found yet another low, off 6p at 154p, and General Electric lost 9p to 371p.

Among second-liners, Pilkington cracked 10.5p to 1.045p, lowest for more than five years, as stories swirled that it was near to producing a profit warning. Finance director Andrew Robb denied any such intention. He was prepared to go along with the company's stockbroker, Cazenove, which six weeks ago cut its forecast to £110m, leaving a maintained dividend uncovered.

Mr Robb, who plans meetings with some investment houses, bought 12,007 shares at

108p; chairman Sir Nigel Rudd picked up 100,000 at 107.5p.

The increasing worries about sterling's impact on exporters' earnings killed what had at one time looked like a strong Foostie display.

With Far Eastern markets continuing to recover, Foostie quickly scored a 50.5 points gain and seemed to have the desire to close in on its 5,330.8 peak. But with New York closed enthusiasm evaporated and by the close the gain had been eroded to 10.5 at 5,273.6.

Drugs did their best to give the stock market a shot in the arm. The sector rose more than 5 per cent as stories of a SmithKline Beecham deal dominated activity. The drugs giant, according to rumours rife in the US, is on the verge of a product alliance, perhaps even a merger, with American Home Products. Although the companies refused to comment SB surged 61p to 743p.

injecting life into Glaxo Wellcome (52p at 1,639p) and Zeneca (72p to 2,297p). Glaxo also drew strength from a US presentation.

Rumoured corporate activity, with the inevitable story of a mega-bid being lined up, created much of the day's action.

Allied Domecq jumped 21p to 568p as the story of a deal with Seagram was given another whirl and GRE, the insurance group, rose 13.25p to 368p on talk of a Continental strike.

Ladbroke, accompanied by Hilton Hotels bid speculation, improved 7.75p to 298.75p, and Woolwich, with almost all the big money groups in the frame, put on 5p to 340p.

Much of the session's real takeover action involved Allied Colloids, the chemical group unloved and unwanted at 101.5p in November. The shares rose 28p to 196.5p as Hercules of the US and Ciba of Switzerland clashed for con-

trol. Underlining the neglected value on the market's undercard, Bluebird, the toys group, rose 27.5p to 112.5p as Sir Ron Brierley's Guinness Peat slapped in a £42m offer, 101p a share. The bid was promptly denounced by Bluebird.

Astec (BSR), the electronic equipment group, added 6p to 117p after its independent directors rejected a 111p-a-share offer from the controlling

shareholder, Emerson Electric, as "wholly inadequate".

Blue chips with little Far Eastern exposure, such as Railtrack and Whitbread, moved ahead. Utilities also benefited from the flight to domestic shares.

Another raft of festive trading statements had a mixed reception. Body Shop International ended 10p lower at 127.5p while Thorntons hardened 9p to 279p. Blacks Leisure fell 13p to 472p.

Southern, where take-over rumours hover, weakened 8p to 237.5p. Interim figures are due today, around £56m against £54.6m, is expected.

Cairn Energy held at 445p as a hovering line of 2.3 million shares was cleared at 440p. United Energy, with presentations planned, was unchanged at 18.5p.

Arjo Wiggins Appleton, the paper and packaging group, fell 10p to 147p; Dresdner

Kleinwort Benson reduced its profits forecast from £241m to £220m. Tate & Lyle, the sugar group, rose 8p to 533p; NatWest Securities pushed its profits estimate 5 per cent higher to £263m.

BSkyB had a fuzzy time, off 31.5p to 378.5p, a two-year low. European regulatory concerns and worries about prospects did the damage. BZW cut its profits forecasts from £295m to £290m and from £400m to £320m.

Pottery shares were chipped as worries about the industry's prospects deepened. Churchill China fell 17.5p to 412.5p and Royal Doulton 10p to 198.5p.

Food group John Lusty rose 0.75p to 8.75p (after 9.25p) in brisk turnover.

Aston Villa stumbled 49p to 653.5p after Saturday's 5-0 demolition by Blackburn Rovers. Chelsea Village fell 3p to 100.5p.

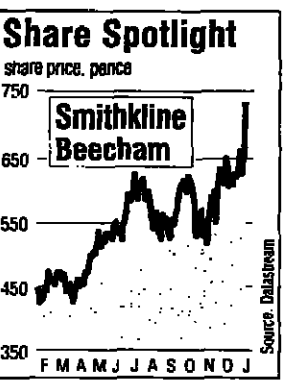
TAKING STOCK

Proteus International, the healthcare group, rose 23p to 83p as the Irish offered what could be a breakthrough for its BSE diagnostic system.

A 168-strong supermarket chain is selling BSE tested and labelled beef. The tests are carried out by a Proteus licensee at its laboratory outside Dublin. Beef carcasses are examined for £20 a time with royalties paid to Proteus.

Aromac fell 2.5p to 12p. It confirmed a nominee company had sold a 4.9 per cent stake. The deal took place on the day Aromac said it knew of no reason for any share weakness.

Versailles, a trade finance group, should lift profits by more than £2m to £7.2m this year and £2m to £9m next, believes stockbroker Teather & Greenwood. The shares are 47.5p.



52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	P/E	Code
Alcoholic Beverages								
001 300	100.00	95.00	3000	100.00	+0.00	2.00	12.00	3000
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52 week				52 week			
Weeks	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	P/E Code
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36 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00
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43 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00
44 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00
45 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00
46 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00
47 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00
48 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00
49 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00
50 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00
51 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00
52 450	177.00	124.00	35	169.75	+0.00	2.00	12.00

MOTOR RACING

Hill unhappy with Jordan's parity policy

Jordan rolled out their car for the 1998 Formula One season yesterday, but the pomp was punctuated by Damon Hill's misgivings at not being the No 1 driver with his new team.

Derick Allsup reports.

The ghosts of seasons past revisited Damon Hill yesterday as he sought a future of revived hope and success.

Hill, the former Formula One world champion, may have been regarded as the obvious top of the bill for Jordan-Mugen-Honda, even on a stage shared with the team's new car, which was lowered from the roof of London's Royal Albert Hall accompanied by music and dancing from the Cirque du Soleil.

However, Eddie Jordan, the team principal, insisted the British driver would be sharing equal status with his partner this year and Hill could not contain his disquiet.

Not least, perhaps, because his new team-mate is Ralf Schumacher, younger brother of Michael. Suddenly all the old phobias seemed to be closing in on Hill, with the opening race in Melbourne eight weeks away.

"To win in Formula One you have to beat Michael Schumacher, who has his entire team working on his behalf," Hill said. "If you have limited resources it is important to direct them in the right way. Ralf is keen to be up front and so am I. To seriously get the best and most competitive performance you need the attention Michael

had at Benetton and now has at Ferrari, and maybe that is to the benefit of everyone in the team."

Hill has consistently maintained that his 1995 World Championship challenge was undermined by Williams' refusal to subject David Coulthard to team orders and the thorny issue has reappeared even before he has driven a lap for Jordan.

Ralf Schumacher, after only one season in Formula One has a reputation as an uncompromising competitor and for all the expressions of unity, there appears little doubt that Jordan will be the scene of one of the season's more intriguing sub-plots.

Jordan, who had to bring Schumacher and his former team-mate, Giancarlo Fisichella into line after a collision last season, still believes in the merits of healthy rivalry, arguing that parity is both fair and productive.

"What Damon has said here is what he said right at the start of our discussions, but what Michael does is Michael's business," he said. "At Jordan no individual is greater than the team. Williams do not have a No 1, but they know it would be stupid not to get one of their drivers to help if the other was in the position to win the title. That's good team tactics."

"I'm not dictatorial. I gave Ralf assurances about this and both will help each other, in fairness to both. If one has the possibility of winning a race or championship, the other will help. We have to be reasonable."

Hill attempted to deflect any tension with a little humour. "So far so good. I've explained to Ralf that Queen Victoria was married to a German, so we're all half-German!" he said.



Show time: Jordan's new car makes a dramatic entrance yesterday. Photograph: Peter Jay

"It's going to be good with Ralf. There's no one out there who wants to beat Michael like Ralf does, so we should make a good team."

Schumacher seemed bemused by that comment and wished it to be known he was "not only trying to beat Michael". He added: "It will be a good relationship. We are going for the same aims - good results. I have a lot to learn from Damon."

Jordan is hoping Hill's experience will provide the key to unlock the team's maiden grand prix win after seven seasons of promise. He hails his new car, which bears a bumblebee logo in place of a serpent - as the best the team have produced.

"I won't get sucked into saying we'll get our first win this season," Jordan said, "but we do have a car capable of winning. If the team continue to put in

100 per cent effort, I am sure we'll be very close."

Hill's immediate concern is to get to grips with the car for the first time since last season. "My ambitions are high and I'm straining at the leash to get back in the car," he said. "I'll now more about our prospects when I've started testing in Barcelona later this week. But I'd be very unhappy if I went through the season without a win."

CRICKET

Time is running out for Ambrose

The West Indies selectors have some tough choices to make when they meet today. Tony Cazier, in Kingston, believes they will resist the temptation to make major changes for the first Test against England.

Curtly Ambrose's form and match fitness are cause for concern for the West Indies selectors as they meet here today to choose the squad of 13 for the first Test against England, starting at Kingston's Sabina Park on Thursday week.

It is unthinkable that Ambrose's name will be missing when their list is released. His reputation, based on 307 Test wickets, 117 of them against England at just under 20 runs apiece, affords him an immediate psychological advantage. His experience is also an invaluable asset to a team shaken by their recent 3-0 thrashing by Pakistan and under an untested new captain, Brian Lara.

However, the tall Antiguan is now 34, was incapacitated by a back strain that caused him to leave the Pakistan tour early and in his two matches in the domestic President's Cup over the past two weekends he has been a shadow of the assassin who has so often demolished England.

His problems were starkly in evidence in his latest match for the Leeward Islands against Barbados at Kensington Oval, scene of some of his most memorable performances, such as his match-winning 8 for 45 in 1991 against England. Throughout, he confined himself to a shorter run and, apart from one typically testing spell at the start of the second day, lacked his old zip.

With Barbados five short of a first-innings lead and with Patterson Thompson, the burly fast bowler who is one of the game's more authentic No 11s, at the crease, Ambrose was given the second new ball to polish things off. Instead, he was twice smashed to the cover boundary by Thompson and sprayed the ball down the leg side for four byes that levelled the scores. He also repeatedly overstepped the front crease.

Never previously bothered by no-balls, Ambrose has now delivered 49 in his 47 overs this season. It is a clear sign that his rhythm, such an essential element in a fast bowler's action, especially his own, is defective at present.

He still has one more President's Cup match, against Lara's Trinidad and Tobago, to get things right and England have enough respect for him not to take anything for granted. For West Indians, his recent decline - he managed one wicket from 44 overs in the Tests in Pakistan and has taken only five wickets so far this season - is unnerving.

While Ambrose has struggled, his long-time accomplices, Courtney Walsh and Ian Bishop, have been among the wickets in the President's Cup. Three of the new generation of speed men, Franklyn Rose, Nixon McLean and the left-arm Pedro Collins, have also struted their stuff impressively and another, Merv Dillon, has recovered from a strained elbow and plays for Trinidad and Tobago against the Leewards this weekend.

So the selectors have options among the bowlers, though they are unlikely to take them up just yet. In the batting, they have few and are likely to stick with an order that is well-known to Mike Atherton and his men. WEST INDIES (probable first squad): B Lara (capt), S Thompson, S Williams, C Hooper, S Chandrasekhar, J Adams, D Williams (wicket-keeper), C Ambrose, F Rose, C McLean, P Collins, I Bishop, M Dillon, R Llewellyn.

Maddy and James spark scoring spree

The England manager, Graham Gooch, and the coach, Mike Gatting, both wore contented smiles yesterday after Darren Maddy's century inspired England A against a Colts XI in Colombo.

On the opening day of their three-day match, the tourists produced an impressive batting display to reach an imposing 373 for 9 at the close.

Gooch and Gatting had reminded the side of the disciplines required to succeed in Sri Lanka after Saturday's disappointing defeat against the President's XI. Yesterday, instead of struggling to combat the spinners - a major factor in their weekend setback - they dominated so much that the opposition captain, Sajit Kalavittigoda, was forced to recall his main fast bowler, Suresh Perera, to protect his slow bowlers from more punishment.

Leading the run spree once again was Leicestershire's Maddy, who followed up his career best 202 in the drawn first-class match against Kenya a fortnight ago by hitting a superb 101.

Steve James put his disappointing early tour form behind him to score a determined 66 while both Ashley Giles and James Ormond produced a series of flamboyant late-order strokes to ensure that England reached a challenging total after their captain, Nick Knight, had fallen early.

First day of three-day match between Sri Lanka A and England A - First innings: S P James c Darren B Perera b S Chandrasekhar 101, Maddy 101, C Hooper c Darren B Perera b S Chandrasekhar 66, D Williams 66, J Adams 45, S Thompson 45, P Collins 45, I Bishop 45, M Dillon 45, R Llewellyn 45. Second day: S P James c Darren B Perera b S Chandrasekhar 66, Maddy 66, C Hooper c Darren B Perera b S Chandrasekhar 66, D Williams 66, J Adams 66, S Thompson 66, P Collins 66, I Bishop 66, M Dillon 66, R Llewellyn 66. Third day: S P James c Darren B Perera b S Chandrasekhar 66, Maddy 66, C Hooper c Darren B Perera b S Chandrasekhar 66, D Williams 66, J Adams 66, S Thompson 66, P Collins 66, I Bishop 66, M Dillon 66, R Llewellyn 66.

PHILIPS



Today we publish the updated results of The Independent Fantasy Football League. The player scores are for all League games played until Sunday January 18th. The league table includes all scores up to January 11th. Neither set of scores includes results from the FA Cup. The manager who is the overall winner will win a trip to the world cup finals in France next Summer.

Every time one of your players score you get four points. There are four points for a keeper or a defender every time their team keeps a clean sheet. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e. if there is a one goal difference in the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded 1 bonus point awarded in addition to standard goal related points. Each successful Assist, a pass judged by our experts to lead directly to a goal, will give a player 3 points. The opinion of our experts on the matter is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

If a player is given a Yellow Card they lose 1 point, if a player is given a Red Card they lose 3 points. Own goals, either scored or conceded, do not count.

The Premiership Manager that you choose will be awarded 3 points if their real-life team wins, 1 point is awarded if they draw and no points are given if they lose.

Updated player scores and league tables will be published every Tuesday in The Independent and repeated the following Sunday in the Independent on Sunday.

HOW TO SCORE	
player scores	4
clean sheet	4
winning goal	1
successful assist	3
yellow card	-1
red card	-3
manager's team wins	3
draw	1
loss	0

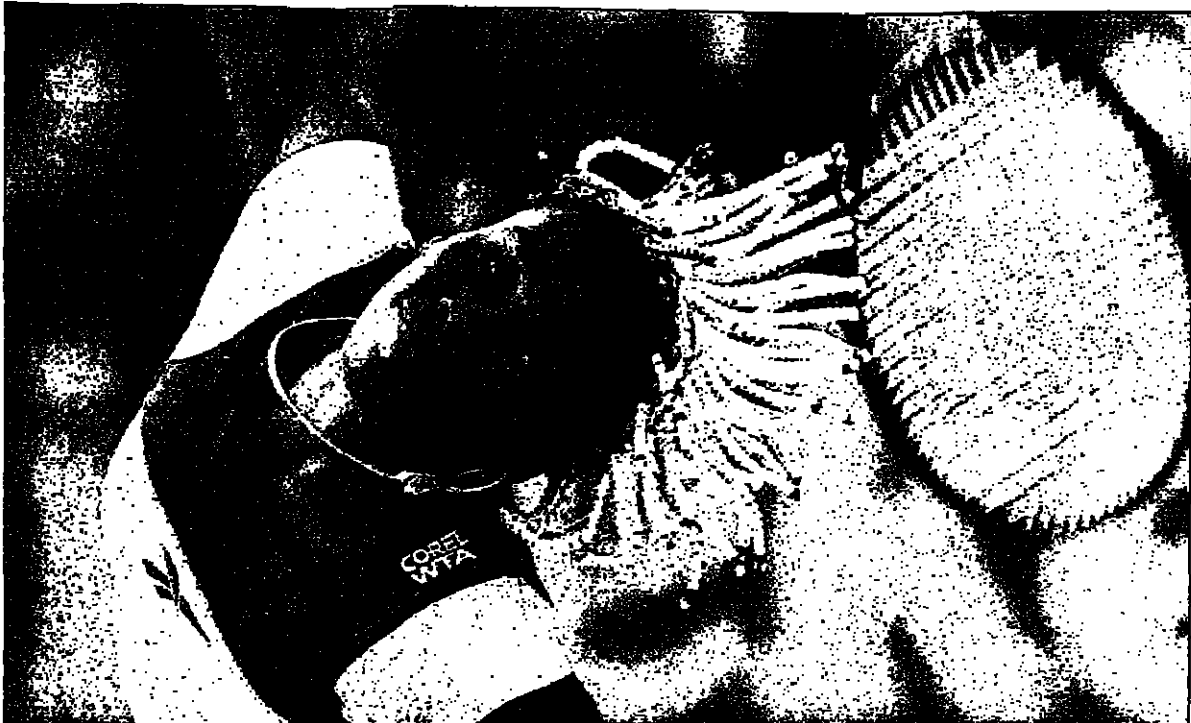
INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

LEAGUE TABLE			
CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 8 AUGUST - 12 JANUARY			
POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	Mr I Boyle	Wembley Bounders	750
2	Mr A Wingrove	Tonys Boys	750
3	Mr T Lyons	Diana's Demons	749
4	Mr B Baker	Deja Vu	749
5	Mr B Sari	Simply The Best	748
6	Mr B Sari	The Untouchables	748
7	Mr D Aston	Billy Boy's 2nd Eleven	746
8	Mr C King	Seeking Victory	746
9	Mr P Tuffler	Pit Ups 4	746
10	Mr D Evans	Boothend End Old Boys	746
11	Mr J Cox	Southville FC	746
12	Mr Archer	No Wright	744
13	Miss Lisa Wild	Amaretto FC	742
14	Mr S Scott	Unbeatable	742
15	Mr J McCrossam	Washed Up Army	739
16	Mr D Edmondson	Edmo Utd	734
17	Mr Brady	Look Lively	731
18	Mr M Ward	Team A40	728
19	Mr S Scott	The Dream Team	724
20	Mr D Aston	Billy Boy's 3rd II	724
21	Mr G Bell	Stunning Stuns	723
22	Mr I Brown	The Hoofers	721
23	Mr D Baker	Dead Heat	721
24	Mr G Bell	The Hairy Monsters	721
25	Mr A Choudi	Nicky's 9th II	720
26	Mr C Thomas	Clogston Rovers	720
27	Mr G Ford	Shorstone Extras	720
28	Mr J McCrossam	Linthorpe Rovers	719
29	Mr P Cridland	Washed Up Army	719
30	Mr K Boyle	Whisper Town Cunts	718
31	Mr C Hepstead	Viva Baby Jo	718
32	Mr A Cunningham	The Zebra	718
33	Mr T Robson	PJ United	718
34	Mr S Man	Rebecca Rovers	711
35	Mr M Ewins	Mike's C Team	711
36	Mr D Ackroyd	Jack's Lads	711
37	Mr S Hayes	Early Birds	711
38	Mr S Walker	Daniels United	710
39	Mr Cox	Retro Rovers	710
40	Mr M Ewins	I've Started But I'll Finish	709
41	Mr M Ewins	Mike's A Team	709
42	Mr A Mitchell	The Eye For It	709
43	Mr A Mitchell	Nursery Park Rovers	708
44	Mr J Costello	The Sky Blue B Team	707

GOALKEEPERS			
POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	Mr I Boyle	Wembley Bounders	4.0
2	Mr A Wingrove	Tonys Boys	4.0
3	Mr T Lyons	Diana's Demons	4.0
4	Mr B Baker	Deja Vu	4.0
5	Mr B Sari	Simply The Best	4.0
6	Mr B Sari	The Untouchables	4.0
7	Mr D Aston	Billy Boy's 2nd Eleven	4.0
8	Mr C King	Seeking Victory	4.0
9	Mr P Tuffler	Pit Ups 4	4.0
10	Mr D Evans	Boothend End Old Boys	4.0
11	Mr J Cox	Southville FC	4.0
12	Mr Archer	No Wright	4.0
13	Miss Lisa Wild	Amaretto FC	4.0
14	Mr S Scott	Unbeatable	4.0
15	Mr J McCrossam	Washed Up Army	4.0
16	Mr D Edmondson	Edmo Utd	4.0
17	Mr Brady	Look Lively	4.0
18	Mr M Ward	Team A40	4.0
19	Mr S Scott	The Dream Team	4.0
20	Mr D Aston	Billy Boy's 3rd II	4.0
21	Mr G Bell	Stunning Stuns	4.0
22	Mr I Brown	The Hoofers	4.0
23	Mr D Baker	Dead Heat	4.0
24	Mr G Bell	The Hairy Monsters	4.0
25	Mr A Choudi	Nicky's 9th II	4.0
26	Mr C Thomas	Clogston Rovers	4.0
27	Mr G Ford	Shorstone Extras	4.0
28	Mr J McCrossam	Linthorpe Rovers	4.0
29	Mr P Cridland	Washed Up Army	4.0
30	Mr K Boyle	Whisper Town Cunts	4.0
31	Mr C Hepstead	Viva Baby Jo	4.0
32	Mr A Cunningham	The Zebra	4.0
33	Mr T Robson	PJ United	4.0
34	Mr S Man	Rebecca Rovers	4.0
35	Mr M Ewins	Mike's C Team	4.0
36	Mr D Ackroyd	Jack's Lads	4.0
37	Mr S Hayes	Early Birds	4.0
38	Mr S Walker	Daniels United	4.0
39	Mr Cox	Retro Rovers	4.0
40	Mr M Ewins	I've Started But I'll Finish	4.0
41	Mr M Ewins	Mike's A Team	4.0
42	Mr A Mitchell	The Eye For It	4.0
43	Mr A Mitchell	Nursery Park Rovers	4.0
44	Mr J Costello	The Sky Blue B Team	4.0

OVERALL SCORE CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 8 AUGUST - 18 JANUARY			
POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	Mr I Boyle	Wembley Bounders	4.0
2	Mr A Wingrove	Tonys Boys	4.0
3	Mr T Lyons	Diana's Demons	4.0
4	Mr B Baker	Deja Vu	4.0
5	Mr B Sari	Simply The Best	4.0
6	Mr B Sari	The Untouchables	4.0
7	Mr D Aston	Billy Boy's 2nd Eleven	4.0
8	Mr C King	Seeking Victory	4.0
9	Mr P Tuffler	Pit Ups 4	4.0
10	Mr D Evans	Boothend End Old Boys	4.0
11	Mr J Cox	Southville FC	4.0
12	Mr Archer	No Wright	4.0
13	Miss Lisa Wild	Amaretto FC	4.0
14	Mr S Scott	Unbeatable	4.0
15	Mr J McCrossam	Washed Up Army	4.0
16	Mr D Edmondson	Edmo Utd	4.0
17	Mr Brady	Look Lively	4.0
18	Mr M Ward	Team A40	4.0
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22	Mr I Brown	The Hoofers	4.0
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31	Mr C Hepstead	Viva Baby Jo	4.0
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36	Mr D Ackroyd	Jack's Lads	4.0
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42	Mr A Mitchell	The Eye For It	4.0
43	Mr A Mitchell	Nursery Park Rovers	4.0
44	Mr J Costello	The Sky Blue B Team	4.0

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TENNIS: AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Williams sisters set up confrontation

The teenage Williams sisters, Venus and Serena, have wasted no time in making their mark on the Australian Open. After first-round wins yesterday they will now meet for the first time at senior level. Derick Whyte reports from Melbourne.

The Williams sisters provided the perfect first-day script at the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday, unless you were a home supporter rooting for the Lleyton Hewitt.

Younger sister Serena set up the first encounter between the two at senior level when she knocked out the No 6 seed, Irina Spirelea, with a 6-7, 6-3, 6-1 victory on her Grand Slam debut.

The 16-year-old's triumph ensured there would be no repeat of the US Open semi-final last year between Venus and the Romanian Spirelea when the American barged into her opponent at a change of ends. Spirelea was fined \$5,000 (£3,300) for swearing about her opponent at the post-match news conference; Venus's father responding by calling the Romanian a "big white turkey".

However, the meeting between the Florida-based siblings promises to be just as colourful, not only because of the shock of beads each wears in her hair. "I just see it as another match," said Serena, who reached the semi-final of the Sydney International last weekend. "Either I win or lose. I am sure Venus will want to win. I don't think Venus has a reason to fear me. I have no reason to fear her also. I have never feared anyone."

"We have already discussed this several times and I am just happy to get through my first match in my first Slam and I am feeling pretty good about it."

The sisters and doubles partners have met once before in the final of a junior tournament which Venus won.

"It was a long time ago. I was eight. Venus was 10," said Serena, now 15 in the world, compared with Venus, the senior sister by 15 months, who is the world No 16 at 17 years of age.

Spirelea, ranked ninth in the world, appeared to have found Serena's measure when she overcame three set points against her to take the first set on a tie-break.

But Serena stepped up her game in the second and third sets, serving well and sending powerful drives to the Romanian's vulnerable backhand.

Just a few hours later on the

Swinging siblings: Venus Williams (left) serves during her first-round win over France's Alexia Dechaume-Balleret at the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday while her younger sister, Serena, (right) who she now meets in the second round, strikes a backhand during her victory over the No 6 seed, Romania's Irina Spirelea. Photographs: AFP and AP



same court, Venus powered to a 6-3, 6-0 defeat of France's Alexia Dechaume-Balleret. "I have never really thought about playing Serena, but now it's here I guess as the younger sister she is going to want to beat me," Venus said.

"We will practice together as usual. I don't really want to lose to another person, but I would be happier if I lost to her because then I can tell her to go ahead and get that title."

The other women's seed to

fall was Belgium's Sabine Appelmans, in three sets to Belarusian veteran Natasha Zvereva. In the men's event, two Spanish seeds went out: Felix Mantilla and Sergi Bruguera.

The day's most popular loser was Australian teenager Hewitt, who this month became the youngest winner of an ATP Tour event since Michael Chang 10 years ago. Hewitt was beaten 6-2, 6-4, 1-6, 2-6, 6-3 by the 54th-ranked Daniel Vacek of Czechoslovakia. The Adelaide

schoolboy, who beat former No 1 Andre Agassi on his way to the Australian hardcourt title, could not counter Vacek's powerful serve early in the match.

"I'm a little bit disappointed - but if you'd have told me three weeks ago I was going to jump from 550 in the world to 160, I wouldn't have believed you," Hewitt said.

Pete Sampras, the world No 1, had an easier time in his opening match, the defending champion, beating the Dutchman

Sjeng Schalken 7-5, 6-4, 6-2.

Big-serving Australian Mark Philippoussis swept aside Spaniard Alex Calatrava in straight sets.

Philippoussis served 21 aces on his way to a 7-6, 6-4, 7-6 win over Calatrava. "I've been working on that," Philippoussis said of his booming serve. The Australian now meets Morocco's Hicham Arazi, a 7-6, 6-3, 6-2 winner over Germany's Hendrik Dreckmann.

Results, Digest, page 27

HOCKEY

Khalsa follow Slough recipe for success

Slough's dominance of English hockey in the Eighties followed the club's ability to combine the exciting blend of speed and stick-work from their highly talented Asian players with the virtues of the traditional English-bred ones. Khalsa, a team which has in the past been predominantly Asian, over the weekend returned to the top of the DTZ Midland Premier and could be about to benefit from following Slough's successful pattern.

On Saturday they beat Blossomfield 9-1 with three goals from Andy Bostock and two each from Chris Keys and Chris Langley. All three are recruits this season and are of English stock. The other goals came from Balkar Jawanda and Gurinder Purewal. Second-placed Olton and West Warwick also handily defeated North Stafford 5-2.

In the ESL South Premier it was top against bottom with no surprises. After an early blast from Trojans, Eastcote settled down to win comfortably 5-0.

James Grant opened the scoring for them in the 15th minute with James O'Shea adding a second before the interval. Martin McLeod and Grant added further goals early in the second half before Peter Gibbins completed the scoring. Eastcote remain three points ahead of City of Portsmouth at the top while the former National League club Trojans are five points adrift at the bottom. Stuart Avery scored twice in Portsmouth's 3-2 win against Anchorians.

- Bill Colwill

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Sport faces danger of another entanglement with the law over biting fiasco

ALAN
WATKINS
ON RUGBY

The general principle of our law is that no one may consent to have an assault committed on himself or herself. There are two exceptions. One is sexual intercourse. What would otherwise be rape or indecent assault is rendered lawful by consent - though, as Professor Tony Honore somewhat dauntingly puts it in his book *Sex Law*: "Every act of sexual intercourse is prima facie unlawful."

Nor does the law look kindly upon sado-masochistic embellishments. In the homosexual torture case a few years ago, the House of Lords decided that consent was no defence, even if the decision was by a narrow majority of 3-2. There is talk that this whole question of consent in relation to sexual activities will be decided by the European Court of Justice or of Human Rights.

The other exception is participation in what the lawyers call "manly sports". The principal sports where what would otherwise be assault is an integral part are boxing, wrestling and rugby, union or league.

The law has been equally clear that the assault must have been committed within the rules or, as the Rugby Football Union insists on calling them, the laws of the game. Any assault in breach of the rules is also in breach of the civil law, the criminal law or, usually, both.

Until recently, assaults in rugby were dealt with, if at all, either by the referee on the spot or by the club afterwards. The law has been invoked within the last 25 years or so. A few players, such as David Bishop, of Pontypool and Wales, and Simon Devereaux, of Gloucester,

have been dealt with rigorously, some (though not I) would say harshly; others, such as Wade Doolley, of Preston Grasshoppers, Fylde and England, have been lucky to escape with a caution.

So far, the forces of law and order have shown a marked reluctance to involve themselves in the case of Simon Fenn's ear. A police spokesman was quoted as saying, shortly after the incident (it is easy to lapse into police-speak; and talk about an incident) that there had been no official complaint and, until there was, no action would be taken.

I hesitate to take issue with the spokesman, but whether or not a crime has been committed - as it clearly has, by someone, in the Fenn case - does not depend on whether a complaint about it has been made. If the authorities are reluc-

tant to undertake a prosecution, as they evidently are, Fenn can undertake a private prosecution of his own. He can also bring a civil action under the law of Tort.

It was the threat of legal action which was the principal cause of the Trappist silence preserved by the entire Llanelli team and their officials some 20 years ago in the case of the raising of Ralston. Chris Ralston was a fine line-out lock who played for Richmond, England and the Lions. In those more relaxed days, Richmond would play not only Llanelli, but Swansea and Neath as well. In one of these usually enjoyable encounters, Ralston was "raked" by a Llanelli forward.

His prosperous father threatened to take legal action. In fact, the name of the culprit in the Llanelli pack was never formally made known. And the only result of the

episode was the sad cancellation of fixtures between the clubs.

The Fenn episode is more serious. Indeed, if the raking of Ralston were to be repeated in an equivalent fixture today - if the unfortunate Fenn had a few solid weeks down his back rather than a quarter of his ear missing - I doubt whether anyone would be making any fuss at all.

So much for the theory, very popular lately, that rugby is now less rough than it was in the old days. It may be less dirty, less niggly. At the top level, a combination of line-men, video cameras and Press interest has seen to that. But it is rougher, much rougher, because the players are bigger, fitter, faster and, above all, more ruthless in trying to achieve their objectives.

For myself, I hope that the Fenn episode does not get to the Law Courts, even though Victor Uhogu

and Federico Mendez have a strong case in defamation against London Scottish.

For in all these cases the participants suffer - if not financially then emotionally, except the gentlemen in wigs. They are probably bringing out the vintage port already in anticipation of the rich pickings that may shortly be on offer.

Alas, this does not mean that the alternative disciplinary proceedings available are satisfactory. Far from it: it is absurd that there should be two tribunals, one set up by Bath and its hearing now postponed, the other by the RFU and its own hearing postponed also as a consequence. It is even more ridiculous that the RFU's body should choose to rely on facts established by the miscreant's own club instead of conducting its own independent investigations.

RUGBY UNION

Fenn could return before ear case ends

The various investigations into the mystery of Simon Fenn's ear may have meandered into an ocean of legal quicksand, but the player himself is making some progress.

Chris Hewett delivers the latest bulletin from the biting front.

London Scottish hope Simon Fenn, the Australian flanker at the centre of the longest-running scandal since Watergate, will make his comeback in the Allied Dunbar Premiership Two match at Moseley on Saturday week. You might almost say the Exiles have earmarked him for the game and if he plays, rugby's disciplinary chiefs will find themselves in the embarrassing position of seeing a victim of serious foul play restored to action before his assailant is unmasked.

"We've loosely identified the Moseley game for Simon, but a lot depends on how his recovery goes over the next week or so," said Kirsten Baker, the London Scottish spokeswoman.

"He's keen to get back, but he has not undertaken any contact work so far. Psychologically, he needs to be involved - it's a case of the sooner, the better - but he has to make sure of his ground medically."

Fenn received 25 stitches in a wound sustained during the

Bath-London Scottish cup tie 11 days ago, an injury that has generated a torrent of conflicting opinion. Last week, Bath's honorary surgeon, Philip Bliss, controversially suggested there had been "no tissue loss", even though he had not personally examined the player. Scottish remain adamant that "a piece is missing" from the ear and have medical evidence in support of that assertion.

Meanwhile, Kevin Yates, the England loose-head prop suspended pending further inquiries into the affair, must wait until 3 February for his own club's internal disciplinary hearing. To make matters yet more frustrating for everyone concerned, no date has been set for the Rugby Football Union's deliberations on the subject, which will almost certainly carry more weight than the Bath version.

Bath claim they are still awaiting evidence promised them by London Scottish, but true to form, there was even a dispute about that yesterday. The Exiles insisted all available video footage was sent by courier to the Recreation Ground last week, along with player statements and still photographs. The medical evidence, they added, was in the hands of the RFU.

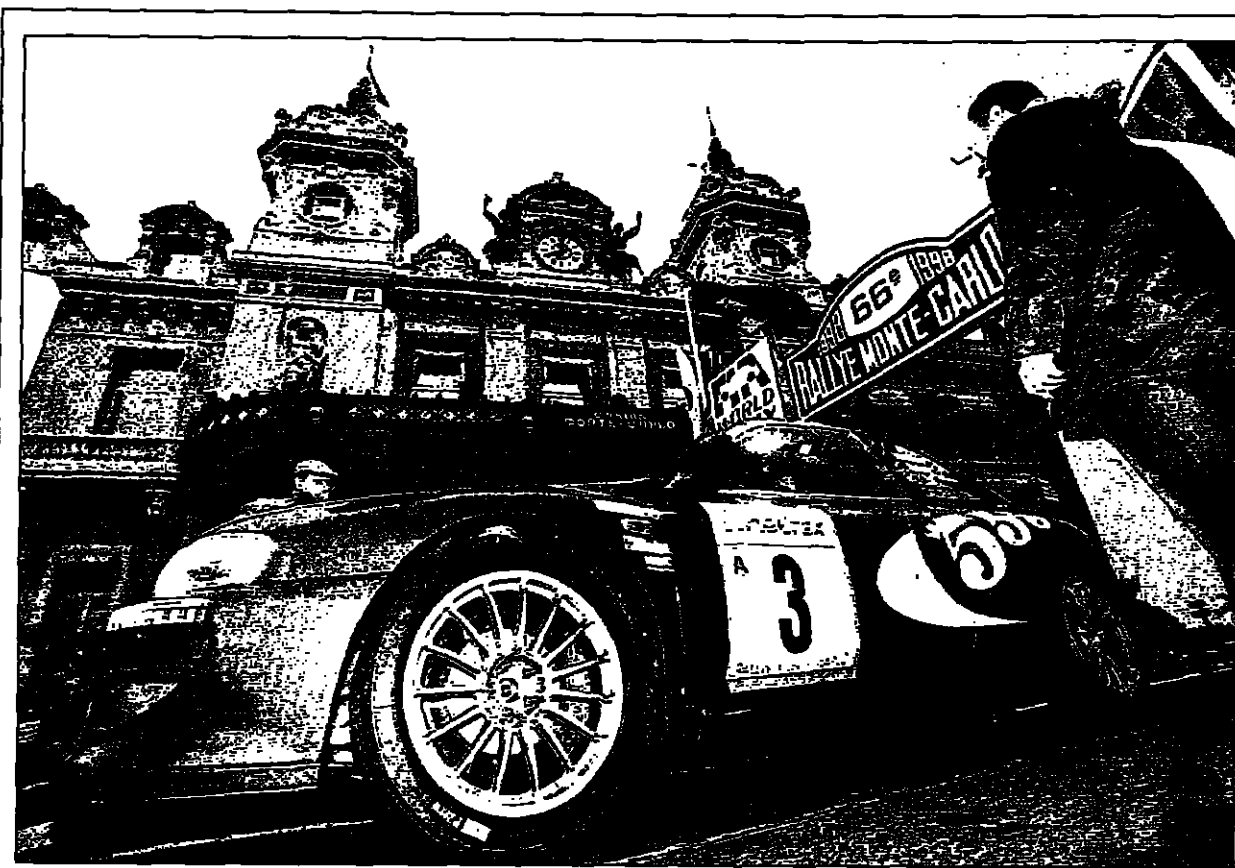
As if the West Countrymen were not under enough pressure, they were wondering yesterday whether Jeremy Guscott, their outstanding international

centre, would play sufficient rugby to persuade England to risk him against France in the Five Nations opener on 7 February. The postponement of Sunday's match at Newcastle, which would have signalled Guscott's comeback after six months of injury hassle, has not helped the cause one little bit.

"All I can do now is look forward to our cup match against Richmond on Saturday," Guscott said. "I know time is running short in terms of convincing the England selectors that I am the man for their midfield, but I also know I am fit. It's a question of getting in the games." At least the Richmond tie was certain to go ahead. Reports suggesting Bath might be bombed out of the competition by the RFU over the London Scottish incident were dismissed in all quarters yesterday.

There is more promising news of Richard Cockerill, the Leicester hooker now expected to be available for England against France, because medical examination of the knee he injured during his club's league win over Wasps on Saturday has revealed no mechanical damage to the joint.

Richard Hill, the England flanker who has not played for five weeks because of hamstring and lower back problems, will turn out for Saracens' second-string at Richmond tomorrow, provided he comes through a training session today.



Prince Albert of Monaco (right) watches Colin McRae in his Subaru before the start of the Monte Carlo Rally yesterday. Britain's Richard Burns and McRae were fourth and fifth respectively after six timed stages. Photograph: Reuters

BASKETBALL

Tigers honoured but keep focus on another title

It was back to the office for Thames Valley Tigers today after being honoured at a hastily arranged civic reception at Bracknell Council offices last night. The players faced two training sessions and another tomorrow with the coach, Paul Jones, before confronting Greater London Leopards in the second leg of their Uni-Hall League Trophy quarter-final. Saturday's 82-78 win over

Leicester City Riders in the Sainsbury's Classic Cola National Cup final at Sheffield Arena was confined to memory, as Tigers continued their pursuit of another title.

"The players will focus on the game, I'm sure of that," James, the 33-year-old former England international, said. "We've got one competition out of the way, but we're not satisfied yet and there

are other trophies to go after.

"We could have done with another training session more quickly after the final, but the civic reception is a great honour and the club deserves it." The Bracknell Forest council leader, Paul Bettinson, telephoned colleagues from a supporters' club coach travelling back from Sheffield with instructions to begin planning the double celebration. Tigers

women's team also won their National Cup by ending the eight-year reign of Sheffield Hatters with a 68-46 victory.

Tigers' men must overturn a four-point deficit in tonight's tie, one of three second-leg games. Holders London Towers take a 21-point lead to Manchester Leopards, Sheffield Sharks are only three ahead of the Riders at Leicester.

— Richard Taylor

FOOTBALL

Crosby calls it a day at Oxford

Malcolm Crosby yesterday stood down as the manager of beleaguered Oxford United after just five games in charge.

The 43-year-old former Sunderland manager, who was named as Denis Smith's successor, had turned down a manager's contract at the Manor Ground. The First Division club, who had not won a match while Crosby was in charge, are now looking for a new manager, but will retain Crosby as first-team coach.

"I feel it's in the best interests of the club to have a new face with new ideas," Crosby said. "Management possibly is not for me."

Another struggling First Division club, Stoke City, may turn to the Everton director, Lord Grantham, in their search for a new chairman after last week's resignation of Peter Coates. The 46-year-old, a director of the Littlewoods organisation, has had talks with City's vice-chairman, Keith Humphreys.

Kilmarnock have signed the 33-year-old goalkeeper Gordon Marshall from Celtic for £150,000, following the departure of the Yugoslav international, Dragoje Lekovic, to Spain's Sporting Gijon.

Heavy snow in north and east Scotland has led to the postponement of tonight's rescheduled Scottish League Premier Division fixtures between Dundee United and Celtic at Tannadice Park, and Aberdeen and Dunfermline at Pittodrie.

— Rupert Metcalf

SPORTING DIGEST

Athletics
HOUSTON MARATHON: Marc 1:54 Nkrum (Ken) 2:11; 2nd 2:15; 3rd 2:15; 4th 2:15; 5th 2:15; 6th 2:15; 7th 2:15; 8th 2:15; 9th 2:15; 10th 2:15; 11th 2:15; 12th 2:15; 13th 2:15; 14th 2:15; 15th 2:15; 16th 2:15; 17th 2:15; 18th 2:15; 19th 2:15; 20th 2:15; 21st 2:15; 22nd 2:15; 23rd 2:15; 24th 2:15; 25th 2:15; 26th 2:15; 27th 2:15; 28th 2:15; 29th 2:15; 30th 2:15; 31st 2:15; 32nd 2:15; 33rd 2:15; 34th 2:15; 35th 2:15; 36th 2:15; 37th 2:15; 38th 2:15; 39th 2:15; 40th 2:15; 41st 2:15; 42nd 2:15; 43rd 2:15; 44th 2:15; 45th 2:15; 46th 2:15; 47th 2:15; 48th 2:15; 49th 2:15; 50th 2:15; 51st 2:15; 52nd 2:15; 53rd 2:15; 54th 2:15; 55th 2:15; 56th 2:15; 57th 2:15; 58th 2:15; 59th 2:15; 60th 2:15; 61st 2:15; 62nd 2:15; 63rd 2:15; 64th 2:15; 65th 2:15; 66th 2:15; 67th 2:15; 68th 2:15; 69th 2:15; 70th 2:15; 71st 2:15; 72nd 2:15; 73rd 2:15; 74th 2:15; 75th 2:15; 76th 2:15; 77th 2:15; 78th 2:15; 79th 2:15; 80th 2:15; 81st 2:15; 82nd 2:15; 83rd 2:15; 84th 2:15; 85th 2:15; 86th 2:15; 87th 2:15; 88th 2:15; 89th 2:15; 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175th 2:15; 176th 2:15; 177th 2:15; 178th 2:15; 179th 2:15; 180th 2:15; 181st 2:15; 182nd 2:15; 183rd 2:15; 184th 2:15; 185th 2:15; 186th 2:15; 187th 2:15; 188th 2:15; 189th 2:15; 190th 2:15; 191st 2:15; 192nd 2:15; 193rd 2:15; 194th 2:15; 195th 2:15; 196th 2:15; 197th 2:15; 198th 2:15; 199th 2:15; 200th 2:15; 201st 2:15; 202nd 2:15; 203rd 2:15; 204th 2:15; 205th 2:15; 206th 2:15; 207th 2:15; 208th 2:15; 209th 2:15; 210th 2:15; 211st 2:15; 212th 2:15; 213th 2:15; 214th 2:15; 215th 2:15; 216th 2:15; 217th 2:15; 218th 2:15; 219th 2:15; 220th 2:15; 221st 2:15; 222nd 2:15; 223rd 2:15; 224th 2:15; 225th 2:15; 226th 2:15; 227th 2:15; 228th 2:15; 229th 2:15; 230th 2:15; 231st 2:15; 232nd 2:15; 233rd 2:15; 234th 2:15; 235th 2:15; 236th 2:15; 237th 2:15; 238th 2:15; 239th 2:15; 240th 2:15; 241st 2:15; 242nd 2:15; 243rd 2:15; 244th 2:15; 245th 2:15; 246th 2:15; 247th 2:15; 248th 2:15; 249th 2:15; 250th 2:15; 251st 2:15; 252nd 2:15; 253rd 2:15; 254th 2:15; 255th 2:15; 256th 2:15; 257th 2:15; 258th 2:15; 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595th 2:15; 596th 2:15; 597th 2:15; 598th 2:15; 599th 2:15; 600th 2:15; 601st 2:15; 602nd 2:15; 603rd 2:15; 604th 2:15; 605th 2:15; 606th 2:15; 607th 2:15; 608th 2:15; 609th 2:15; 610th 2:15; 611st 2:15; 612th 2:15; 613th 2:15; 614th 2:15; 615th 2:15; 616th 2:15; 617th 2:15; 618th 2:15; 619th 2:15; 620th 2:15; 621st 2:15; 622nd 2:15; 623rd 2:15; 624th 2:15; 625th 2:15; 626th 2:15; 627th 2:15; 628th 2:15; 629th 2:15; 630th 2:15; 631st 2:15; 632nd 2:15; 633rd 2:15; 634th 2:15; 635th 2:15; 636th 2:15; 637th 2:15; 638th 2:15; 639th 2:15; 640th 2:15; 641st 2:15; 642nd 2:15; 643rd 2:15; 644th 2:15; 645th 2:15; 646th 2:15; 647th 2:15; 648th 2:15; 649th 2:15; 650th 2:15; 651st 2:15; 652nd 2:15; 653rd 2:15; 654th 2:15; 655th 2:15; 656th 2:15; 657th 2:15; 658th 2:15; 659th 2:15; 660th 2:15; 661st 2:15; 662nd 2:15; 663rd 2:15; 664th 2:15; 665th 2:15; 666th 2:15; 667th 2:15; 668th 2:15; 669th 2:15; 670th 2:15; 671st 2:15; 672nd 2:15; 673rd 2:15; 674th 2:15; 675th 2:15; 676th 2:15; 677th 2:15; 678th 2:15; 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Arsenal consider move to Wembley to match United

Arsenal are considering leaving Highbury, their home since 1913, for Wembley stadium in order to accommodate more supporters. Trevor Haylett looks at the problems facing a club trying to match Manchester United's financial muscle.

There was a time when it seemed as though Arsenal were playing at Wembley every other week, such was their domination of the knock-out trophies. Now illusion could become reality if a proposal for the club to move away from their Highbury and set up home at the newly refurbished national stadium gains widespread approval.

Arsenal revealed yesterday that they have opened talks with the Wembley authorities as part of their plans for the future of the club. It is one of several options under review as the Gunners seek the best way to accommodate a support which has outgrown their North London ground. Highbury's present capacity is 38,000; the club want to increase that to 50,000.

The club's preference is to remain where they are and expand on two sides of the ground. Islington Council has given them permission to submit plans to that effect but so vehement is the opposition from residents who fear a loss of housing and intolerable traffic levels that the club might be faced with relocation, even though that will alienate a huge number of fans emotionally tied to a stadium which has been the club's home since 1913.

The Wembley proposal was discussed by the FA Council yesterday. In a statement yesterday Arsenal said: "We have recently been considering ways of increasing our crowd capacity. Initial discussions have taken place with several interested potential parties including Wembley. These discussions are at a very early stage and represent one of a number of options for the club."

The Arsenal chairman, Peter Hill-Wood, has had preliminary talks with Keith Wiseman, the chairman of the Football Association which uses Wembley for England internationals and top domestic fixtures such as the FA Cup Final. Other fixtures already on the Wembley schedule include the rugby league Cup Final, the Coca-Cola Cup Final and the Football League's promotion play-off finals.

The FA's public affairs director, David

Davies, said they would be giving Arsenal's announcement urgent attention. "The FA is aware of today's statement by Arsenal," he said. "It clearly has important implications for all those involved in the partnership that has been developing the National Stadium project, notably the English Sports Council, Wembley Stadium Ltd and ourselves as well as other sports."

Wembley Stadium plc said that as a commercial organisation it is always receptive to business opportunities. "There have been some informal conversations with Arsenal but I must stress that they were very preliminary discussions," their spokesman, Martin Corrie, said.

The famous stadium will begin a massive facelift in June 1999 at a cost of around £240m. After years of criticism that it had become a shoddy relic out of step with mod-

ern times, it will reopen for business in a setting that does justice to its reputation.

Whereas other clubs - Derby, Bolton, Stoke and Sunderland - have successfully negotiated moves to out-of-town sites, London teams, hemmed in by an expanding metropolis, have found it a far harder proposition to relocate. Wimbledon, forced for share with Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park, have been thwarted in their attempts to build their own stadium in the borough of Merton and are giving serious consideration to adopting Dublin as their new home.

Arsenal have known for years that football's accelerating popularity would leave Highbury and its towering stands unable to keep pace with their ambitions. Needing to expand again to compete with the 50,000-plus attendances that fortnightly swell Manchester United's coffers

and to include business and corporate facilities that no Premiership concern can afford to be without, they are hamstringing by a lack of available space.

Bounded in three sides by housing, there was fierce opposition from residents when they built the new North Stand, forcing a substantial alteration to the plans. With the East Stand the subject of a listing, order the next stage of development will focus on the West and South stands.

Islington Council has agreed a planning brief giving the club the green light to submit a planning proposal but is bracing itself for an outcry from the Highbury Community Association who fear traffic congestion and the increased risk of hooliganism. That organisation has Arsenal supporters among its members but all of whom agree the area is already struggling to cope with what it has

Beckenbauer calls for early decision on 2006 World Cup bid

Franz Beckenbauer has warned that Europe is at risk of not being awarded the 2006 World Cup finals if England and Germany keep fighting to stage the tournament. Nick Duxbury reports.

A new Wembley will be waiting, but England's efforts to bring the world's most glittering sporting event to the stadium which will have cost £240m to revamp could come to nothing unless Europe presents a single bid.

The 2006 World Cup is a prize wanted by both England and Germany, and Franz Beckenbauer was yesterday doing his utmost to push Uefa, football's European governing body, into making a decision one way or the other.

Beckenbauer, a leading light in the campaign to bring the tournament to Germany, raised the spectre of the World Cup going to Africa.

"Europe will only stand a chance if it unites behind one single candidate," Beckenbauer, who is also Bayern Munich's president, said.

"If England and Germany keep acting like they have been and arguing for the right to host the World Cup, it will simply favour a third candidate, namely Africa."

The former German international urged Uefa's president, Lennart Johansson, to make a decision quickly.

"Uefa must exercise its authority as soon as possible," said Beckenbauer, who has ruled out a joint bid from England and Germany, saying it would be too expensive and would inevitably lead to problems between the two countries.

Beckenbauer, who won the 1974 World Cup as a player and coached Germany to the 1990 title, declared that Brazil were justifiable favourites to keep their title in France this summer, but England had a good chance.

"England may not be in the first wave of favourites, but since Glenn Hoddle has taken over he has given them soul and on that count alone they are definitely the 'dark horses'," he said.

"Brazil are favourites but it is never easy to defend the title. France, as host country, and Italy must also be considered."

The intrigue surrounding the election of a new Fifa pres-

ident continued as more indications emerged that Sepp Blatter, general secretary of football's world governing body, intended to stand.

The election takes place on 8 June, two days before Brazil and Scotland kick-off the World Cup. However, behind-the-scenes manoeuvring among leading officials threatens to match any on-field tactical battle.

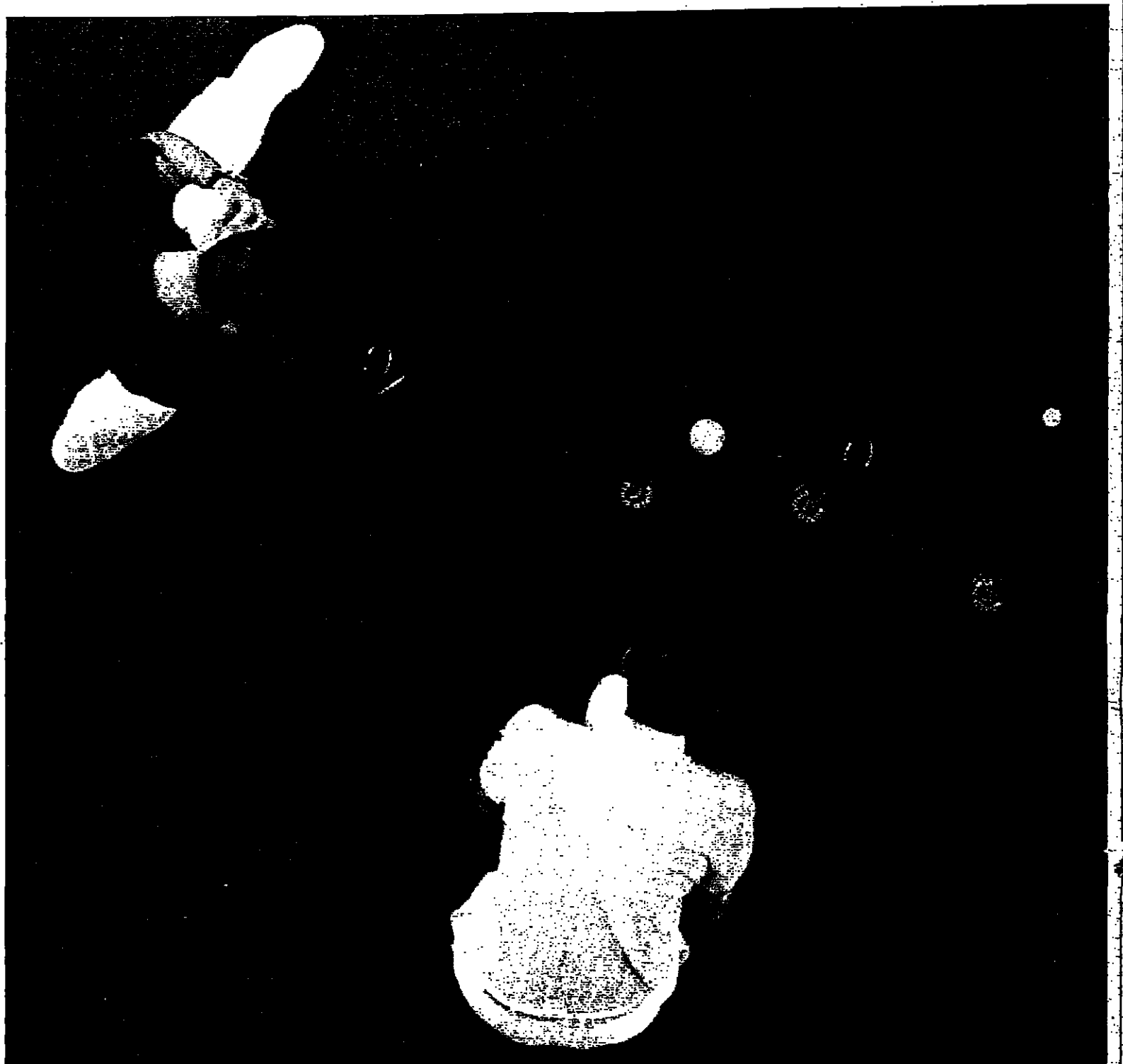
Blatter has regularly denied any interest in taking over from Joao Havelange when the 82-year-old Brazilian retires after 24 years in charge. But his latest utterings seem to indicate a change of mind.

The Swiss Minister for Sport urged his 62-year-old compatriot to stand, leading Blatter to say: "I was flattered by his opinion and, naturally, could not dismiss such proposals out of hand."

Blatter's possible candidature has infuriated the supporters of Uefa's Johansson, the only man to declare an interest officially.

Uefa has demanded that Blatter clarify his intentions and insist that if he is going to stand he should resign his Fifa post immediately. He has until 7 April to declare his intention, although Uefa has insisted he do so within the next 10 days.

Wycombe pair bowled over by Australian artistry



Gary Grace, of England (right), and Steve Glasson, of Australia, check the lie of their woods during the pairs in the World Indoor Bowls Championships at the Guild Hall, Preston, yesterday. The Australian partnership of Glasson and Mark McMahon needed just 14 ends to sweep through to the quarter-finals against Grace and Alan Springell. They beating the English champions, from High Wycombe, 7-1, 7-3, 7-1

Results, Digest, page 27; Photograph: Craig Prentis/Allsport

Referee stands by decision to dismiss Williams

After watching video evidence the referee who caused a storm by sending off Coventry City's Paul Williams on Saturday has decided his original decision was correct. Rupert Metcalf reports.

The Premiership referee Steve Lodge last night confirmed that he was standing by his controversial dismissal of the Coventry defender, Paul Williams, in Saturday's stormy game against Arsenal at Highfield Road.

Lodge was branded "a joke" and "a disgrace" by the Coventry manager, Gordon Strachan, after the game. Williams was sent off for bringing down Dennis Bergkamp when the Arsenal striker was clean through on goal, but television replays sug-

gested that contact was minimal. However, last night Lodge said: "I am quite happy with my decision. I have watched the video and used the slow-motion to go through what happened several times. Having studied it in detail, I have now put my report into the Football Association telling them that Williams got sent off for a professional foul. It was serious foul play. I am standing by that."

There were some good news yesterday for Strachan: the Coventry striker Dion Dublin has turned down a £5m move to Middlesbrough and will stay at Highfield Road for the immediate future.

The 28-year-old, City's leading scorer, had looked set to leave after turning down a £17,000-per-week contract at Highfield Road, but he has now told Strachan that he is happy to stay. His contract expires in 18 months.

Jürgen Klinsmann will not be packing his boots away for good at the end of the season. Reports from Germany on Sunday suggested that the Tottenham striker had said in a television interview that he would quit the game after this summer's World Cup finals. "For me, it will be over after the World Cup. I won't play in the European Championship," he had said.

The German captain's comments were interpreted to mean that he would retire in the summer, after the World Cup. But Klinsmann was referring only to international football -

and he may yet extend his contract at Spurs beyond the end of the current campaign.

Torsten Winkler, a German journalist who participated in the TV interview, said: "He is not sure what he will do after the end of the season - whether or not he remains at Tottenham. But last week, he told me he will definitely not be going to Japan." Klinsmann has often been linked with a lucrative move to the J.League.

Klinsmann told the German sports magazine *Kicker*, in an interview published yesterday: "At the moment, I know for sure what my programme will be only for the next five or six months but I might well stay [at Spurs] a bit longer."

Despite scoring in Sunday's

3-1 Premiership win over Chelsea, Gary Speed, the Everton captain, still wants to leave the Goodison Park club.

Speed is not happy that three bids by Newcastle United have been turned down. His agent, Hayden Evans, said yesterday: "Gary is deeply upset about recent developments at the club and feels passionately that a move would be in his best interests." Talks between the player, Everton's manager, Howard Kendall, and chairman, Peter Johnson, were held yesterday.

Another unsettled player, the transfer-listed Leeds forward Rod Wallace, yesterday hit back at claims by the Elland Road manager, George Graham, that he is being hawked around other clubs by his agent.

"I don't know where Graham got that from," Wallace said yesterday. "I don't know where I am going."

Crosby quits, page 27

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD
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ACROSS
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6 Boss featured in short academic work (4)
10 Icon's for generating sound (5)
11 Use revolutionary method to deal with wet? (6-3)
12 Shout for surrender, worker's finished (5,2)
13 Any sale can go wrong and break down (7)
14 Prophecy for heretic with ecstasy (13)
17 Falls from power? The reverse (13)
21 Dried fruit is in circulation, we hear (7)
22 It provided, e.g., a post for torturing (7)

DOWN
24 Wandering one surprised by Tintern Abbey at first (9)
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26 Seaside feature that is suppressed by priest (4)
27 Financial officer fixed rate with greater certainty (9)

MONDAY'S SOLUTION
1 AFFECTED CREDIT
2 EYE SIGHT
3 CUSTOM
4 D L A I R P
5 SHELLOW SPRAWL
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12 ADROIT STOCKIST
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ON TV Teletext PAGE 250

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